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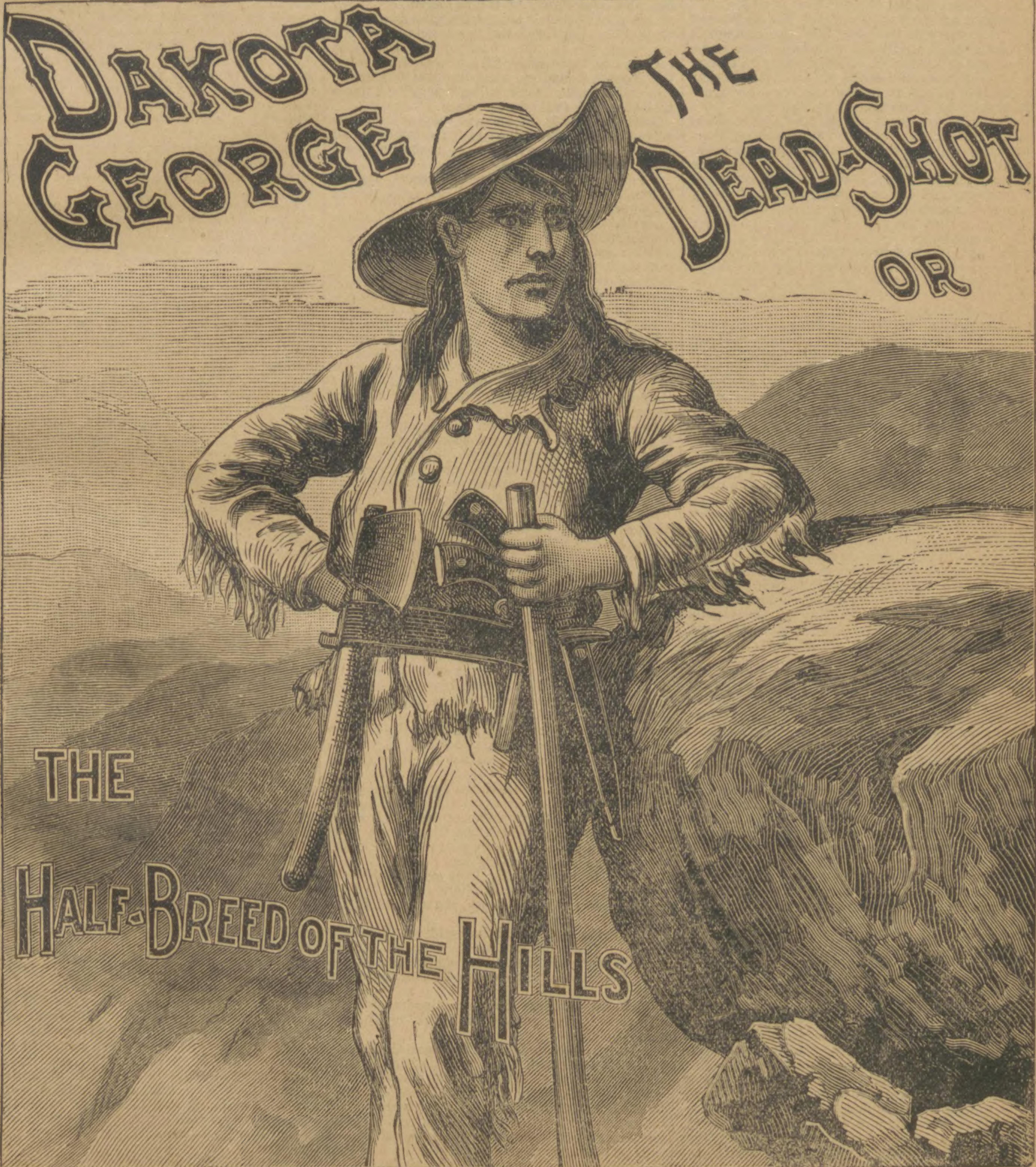
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Dakota George, THE DEAD-SHOT;

OR,

The Half-Breed of the Hills.

A Story of the Great Manitoba League.

BY CAPT. FRED'K WHITTAKER,
AUTHOR OF "JOHN ARMSTRONG, MECHANIC,"
"PARSON JIM, KING OF THE COWBOYS,"
"OLD CROSS-EYE, THE MAVERICK-
HUNTER," "THE MARSHAL
OF SATANSTOWN,"
ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

BROUGHT TO BAY.

A HOT summer's day in the Northwest; the sky like a shield of brass; the air dry and sultry.

Miles on miles of rugged rocks, abrupt precipices, scrubby patches of coppice-wood, with little threads of water, in a land where water is the one thing precious.

An arid land of alkali and sage-brush, yet wherever the water came, the sage-brush died out and the greenest of grass took its place.

Such was the country of the Big Horn and Powder rivers in the year 1876, the centennial of the Republic. But few buffalo were to be seen in that summer. The country had been hunted over by the Indians, driven thither, as their last refuge from the all-pervading frontiersmen, and game was scarce and shy.

The various bands of Minneconjous, Sans Arcs, Cheyennes, Brûlés, Yanktons, and Uncpapas, alarmed by the columns of troops concentrating against them from three-quarters of the compass, had drawn back to their most secret fastnesses, and lay in ambush, ready to sally out as their enemies approached, and never dreaming that the foe could find them before they were ready.

They lay in the valley of the Little Big Horn where the river ran close under some high bluffs on one side and spread out into a level field on the other. Here the lodges had been set up, each band in its own circle.

The squaws were cleaning skins from the last hunt; the children playing on the ground; the ponies out at pasture; the old men squatted by their lodges, talking scandal; while the warriors were for the most part asleep, after the fatigues of their late fight with Crook and the march to the place where the village was pitched.

Everything was peaceful and quiet, as if war had departed from the land, when a remarkable-looking Indian, all alone in the lodge of the chief of the Uncpapas, spread out on the ground before him a rude but correct map of Indian manufacture, and muttered to himself:

"They are divided and will fall into our hands. If the young men will keep awake, we shall do with the Long Hair as we did with the others. Who knows what may happen?"

A singular-looking man he was. Seeing his smooth face, with its bland smile, hair parted in the middle and hanging in two long plaits on either side of the face, an Eastern man would have taken him for an old woman, perhaps the maiden aunt of the tribe, apt at knitting stockings and talking scandal.

Yet this smiling personage was the great Tatonka Otakka, or Sitting Bull, the soul of the Northwestern Confederacy, the man who had never yielded to the whites, and who had sworn he never would "while water ran and grass grew."

"They are divided!" he muttered again, smiling; "and they will be ours if—"

The swift patterning of a pony's feet, urged at full speed, interrupted his soliloquy, and in an instant the alert counselor of the confederacy was on his feet, for he knew that none would enter the camp at such a pace but a scout with a report.

Before he could reach the door of the tepee he heard wild shrieks in women's voices, the shrill yells and whoops of men as they tumbled out of their lodges, while a tumult arose in the camp, telling of trouble at hand.

As Sitting Bull opened the flap of the door to sally out, he saw in the bottom in which the camp was pitched a great cloud of dust coming swiftly toward the lodges, while little white puffs and spitting red flashes were shooting forth from the midst of the cloud, and as he stepped out into the open air, the peculiar "ping-g-g-g" of a bullet over his head gave warning that enemies were coming.

Not very far off either; for through the dust the forms of horsemen in a regular line, with gleaming arms and blue clothing, could be distinctly recognized; and as the line drew nearer, the flashes became more incessant, the whistling of the bullets closer, the thunder of horses' feet more and more audible.

It was a hostile charge, coming right into the

middle of the women and children. These latter, on the run already, were scattered in the body of the village; while the horse-herders were driving in the ponies in a regular stampede, and the warriors, roused from their lazy security by the sudden and unlooked-for attack, were demoralized and ready to follow the ponies.

Even Sitting Bull failed to see a plan by which defeat could be turned into victory, and could think of nothing better than to run with the women and children—the bullet singing through the camp as they went, the ponies galloping by, with snorts of anger and fear, the whole camp buzzing like a hive of bees.

Yet it was right into the midst of this wild panic that a bright figure burst, on a bay pony, coming from the rear of the camp, where the Cheyennes were lying in their lodges, and as it came it was followed by a wild yell of admiration and exultation, as if its single presence gave hope in the midst of despair.

Whether the figure was that of man or woman could not be told, from the rapidity with which it came; but it wore the red war-bonnet of a chief, and showed a face nearly white, with fierce dark eyes that seemed to flash light from their depths.

As it came the cry rose:

"White Falcon! White Falcon! Turn and fight!"

Then the great leader of the confederacy, pausing in his flight at the top of a knoll, saw the whole of the Cheyennes from the other end of the village, streaming out of their tepees after the glittering figure of White Falcon, crouched on the necks of their ponies, flogging away with their short whips, and dashing down to meet the foe, with the peculiar barking cry that had given them their name, fifty years before, when the French-Canadian trappers and voyageurs had called them "Chiens," or "dogs"—a name that has stuck to them ever since.

Smiling proudly as he saw them coming, he waved his arms from the top of the knoll, in full sight of all the skurrying host—at once a signal and an order to advance.

"Fight for the women and children! Follow White Falcon!" and Sitting Bull's face glowed with fierce joy.

As the brilliant figure at the head of all fled by it seemed to produce a singular effect on the squaws and children that saw it, for they stopped short in their flight, and began to yell as loud as the warriors, so that what had been a stampede a moment before had become a halt, with the promise of a stubborn resistance.

Even the children were running into the lodges, and coming out with bows, and arrows and knives, while the squaws had caught up lances and hatchets, and anything they could get hold of, and seemed disposed to die where they stood, rather than yield another foot of ground.

In the midst of all, on the summit of the knoll the figure of the great leader of the confederacy could be seen, waving his arms, while he chanted in a high key some wild, mysterious verses, which the Indians all thought to be some magic chant to procure them victory.

There was excitement enough before, but the sight of his figure and that of the White Falcon, at the head of the Cheyennes, associated as both were in the minds of the Indians with the ideas of "Big Medicine," served the purpose of encouraging the most timid.

Sitting Bull had no occasion to mount a horse; such was not his place that day.

He watched the plain where the dust-cloud had come so perilously close to the village, and saw that it had stopped; while his own Indians had scattered in front of the camp, and were wheeling to and fro in another cloud, denser than the first, from which came a perfect tornado of flashes and sharp cracks.

His brow grew anxious as he saw the Indians hover around the soldiers, not daring to come to close quarters; but in a moment more he smiled and rubbed his hands.

The blueline had halted, the horses were being run off in a dark cloud, and the men had spread out into a thin skirmish line on foot, in front of the village, round which the Cheyennes, with hundreds of other warriors, who were streaming out to join them, were circling.

"They have stopped! They are afraid!" he muttered. "We have a chance yet. But to think that a woman should have done it for us!"

Out in the dust-cloud he could see the white figure, which the Indians had hailed as the "White Falcon," flashing to and fro, and wherever it came the battle seemed to be redoubled in fury.

The wily Sitting Bull remained watching, and presently he rubbed his hands again, and said aloud:

"They are going back. We have them!"

The thin skirmish line of soldiers, as he looked, disappeared, seeming to melt away; but he could see through the dust that the men had run to the left, into a patch of timber which grew close down by the border of the river, from which a ring of flashes was now proceeding.

Then his brow clouded again as he saw that the same Indians, who had been so bold while the foe was in the open bottom, were hovering

round the timber, as if afraid to venture in, while the white figure of the mysterious leader had to all appearances vanished out of the dust-cloud.

He watched the fight in this way for a few minutes, when his anxiety became uncontrollable, and he hastily said to the women near him:

"Take down the lodges. There may be more of them coming in."

The words renewed the panic that had been stopped by the courageous behavior of White Falcon, and the women began to wail again, when a tremendous yell, coming from the Indians outside, attracted their attention to the fight, and it was echoed by another, still louder, from the camp, as they beheld the blue-clad soldiers streaming out of the timber in full flight, as if something had scared them out of their wits, going straight away up the river in the direction from which they had come.

Sitting Bull clapped his hands with glee, as he saw his men, faithful to their traditions of fighting, swarming all round the enemy from whom they had lately fled, pouring streams of fire into their demoralized ranks, while the dark figures could be seen dropping from their saddles, all the way to the river, till the dust hid everything from sight.

"We have driven them away!" he cried, exultingly. "Put up the lodges again."

At that very moment, when he thought himself most secure, came the sound of another volley, far away down the river, from the other end of the village, and a tremendous yelling rose from squaws and children.

The volley rattled on into a regular fusillade, while the shouts of white soldiers, in regular cheers, could be heard; and the smile of exultation faded from the face of the great Sitting Bull. He beckoned hastily to one of his immediate followers, who had been lingering near him with a saddled pony, mounted, and rode off.

He took the direction of the new firing, and had not far to go when he saw a great disturbance among the lodges toward which he was going.

The women and children, driven from the Uncpapa circle by the first attack, were streaming back from the refuge they had taken in the Cheyenne lodges, screaming and wailing; while the signs of confusion were greater than they had been when the camp was first attacked.

But Sitting Bull became aware of the fact that the firing behind him, where the first party of soldiers had been driven off, had ceased; and as he looked back he saw the white figure that had led the first defense, coming back, like a flashing meteor, in advance of a dark cloud of horsemen, who came sweeping on like a torrent, the thunder of the horse-hoofs shaking the ground as they came.

Through the camp they swept, White Falcon riding ahead; and as the flying steeds passed Sitting Bull the chief saw Crazy Horse, the war-chief of the Cheyennes, side by side with White Falcon, waving his rifle and yelling as he went:

"You that want to die like men, now is your time to come with Crazy Horse!"

For the tumult of this second attack, so unexpected, coming in the very moment of fancied victory—the shrieking of the women and children—the uncertainty whether there might not be still more enemies coming from another quarter—all combined to make the coolest warrior half-crazy with fear and desperation; and straight toward the new danger they rushed, forgetting everything else, and thinking only of dying in defense of their homes.

All that is noble in the nature of an Indian—all the tenderness he shares with other men, civilized and savage—was roused by the sight of this new foe almost in the midst of the women and children. Straight toward the place from whence the firing was coming they streamed, frantic and wild—less like warriors than beasts brought to bay.

And at the head of all, side by side with the war-chief of the Cheyennes, White Falcon kept her place, not yelling like the rest, but eying the white smoke that was rising from the river-bank, and going straight toward it, ahead of all but Crazy Horse.

They all seemed to know this silent warrior, and the women especially seemed to be driven frantic by the sight; for, as the white hunting-shirt and crimson war-bonnet passed they yelled to each other:

"The squaw chief leads the men!"

From that moment Sitting Bull seemed to have lost the excitement which possessed him when he first heard the firing at the other side of the river. He rode back to the knoll from whence he could see the whole field and watched.

The new foe had come down a ravine at the very end of the camp, and his warriors were fording the stream in hundreds, swarming to meet the soldiers—some on horseback, some on foot. The firing had become so rapid that it was one never-ending roll, and the noise was approaching the village. The new foe was not like the old.

As Sitting Bull watched he saw warriors coming out of the fight as if panic-stricken, while

wounded men were coming in so fast that the deadly nature of the contest was evident.

A great cloud of smoke and dust rose from the ravine and hung like a pall over all, till the confusion became so great that the chief rode through the camp, crying:

"Take down the lodges! We shall have to move the village!"

It was the second time that day he had given the order; and the women, trembling anew at the way in which their best warriors were giving way, set to work to tear down the tepees, the labor serving, as Sitting Bull knew it would, to divert them from watching the fight.

Still the rattling volleys continued; the smoke and dust rose higher than ever; and the chief watched all alone now on the knoll.

Then a faint smile began to creep over his face, and he whispered to himself:

"It goes back! Our men are driving them."

Still he watched, and still the sound of the firing never ceased, but the quick ear of the chief noted that the shouts which he had heard at the beginning of the battle were being replaced by nothing but the yells of his own men.

The genius of a general was in the brain of this man they call a savage, and he recognized the signs of victory. The moment he did so, he turned his attention from the fight and looked far up the river to the top of a hill to which the first assailants of the village had been driven when they fled from the face of White Falcon.

"We must kill them, too," he muttered. "It will not do to leave any alive."

Just at that moment came a wild yell—a perfect shriek of exultation from the other side of the river as the firing ceased, and he saw the bright figure of White Falcon on the bank, signaling in Indian fashion:

"They are all dead!"

CHAPTER II.

NEVERMISS GEORGE.

MEANWHILE, among the blue-clad soldiers who had first assaulted the village, the confusion and panic had been indescribable. When they first came into the fight they had had everything their own way, but the timidity of their immediate leader, who had first halted and then fled in dismay before a man had been killed, had entailed on them a loss of no less than twenty-seven soldiers, shot down almost without resistance, in their flight to the river.

On the top of a hill on the other side they had been joined by friends who had been in the rear when they first caught sight of the village; but, unknown to the leader of the detachment that had fled so shamefully, quite a number of men had been left behind in the woods.

One of these was a young scout, whose lithe, active figure and clear blue eye, with the hat tilted back on his head, gave him the air of a careless boy more than of a warrior. He carried a long Springfield rifle over his arm, and stood peering out alternately toward the Indian village and the men on the top of the hill, while he spoke in low, cautious tones to the men in the woods, who were for the most part frightened, hardly knowing what to do, for fear the Indians might come after them in their hiding-place.

As the sound of the firing up the river came to his ears, he stole to the very edge of the wood and looked out into the bottom, saying:

"Be quiet! There isn't a red in sight, but thar ain't no knowin' whar they be. Hark to that, now!"

As he spoke, a regular roll of musketry that continued without cessation from minute to minute, brought several men to the edge of the woods to listen with him. Most of them were soldiers, while there was one civilian, a tall, dark personage, with a short, brown beard, who said in a low tone:

"By gosh, George, that's the gin'ral."

George nodded with a worried look on his face, as he answered:

"If the major had only had grit to stay *hyar* when he had 'em we might be puttin' it to 'em, jest this minit. D'y'e know what skeered him? It was jest seein' Bloody Knife killed beside him. The blood and brains squirted all over him as I come out of the bushes, and the moment they did, he jest dug in his spurs and put like all possessed. And now they've all gone arter the gin'ral. Look hyer, boys, who'll go with me and git the boys on the hill to help the gin'ral? Thar they stand, as ef nothen was the matter, and the reds is a-puttin' it to him. Thar ain't a buck in front of us now. Who'll go with me?"

He had expected that the response would be a glad consent; but the men in the wood had been too much demoralized by their late experience to care for incurring new dangers, and he had hard work to get more than six or seven to follow him.

When he finally left the shelter of the wood he had with him a few soldiers, and these were all recruits, who had been in their first fight that day, and who kept their carbines cocked, and glanced nervously from side to side, as if they expected an Indian in every tuft of grass.

But not a soul was to be seen on the bottom which they had lately traversed, and they proceeded on their way to the river without molestation.

As they stepped out into the open air the sound of firing down the river grew louder, and the faint echoes of cheering came to their ears, when George exclaimed:

"That's the gin'ral, boys! I'd know his mark among a million. Come on, quick, or the fun will be over afore we git thar! I'd bet on the gin'ral and the Seventh Calv'ry to beat the hull Sioux nation every time."

He led the way with a free, sweeping stride, past the bodies of dead soldiers, all hacked to pieces, even in the brief fight they had had on their flight to the river, and the recruits began to turn pale and sick at the sight.

George noticed their looks, and said, hastily:

"Don't mind 'em, boys, don't mind 'em. You'll have to git used to that ef you travel with Nevermiss George. Hyar's the river, and thar's the boys on top of the hill. Gosh! ef the major had only stuck whar we was, what a muss we'd be raisin' jest about now!"

He shook his head and ground his teeth like a man in bitter rage as he said it, for he had been in the fight when the stampede took place, and knew how needless it had been.

Then they came to the border of the stream, and as they did so a fresh burst of firing down the course of the river made him exclaim, with an accent of something like exultation:

"The gin'ral's givin' it 'em hot over thar, I reckon. He ain't no duffer like that 'ere major of yours."

Then the firing died away in the distance, and the four men plunged into the stream, which was up to their arm-pits at the ford, and scrambled across to the foot of a steep hill, at the top of which they could see the occasional blue coat of a soldier.

All that were seen appeared to be peeping at the distant Indian village, and speculating on the continuance of the firing.

The refugees were able to get within less than twenty yards of the crest of the hill, and no notice had been taken of them, while the firing up the valley grew louder every moment, when a voice shouted, in accents that told its owner to be frightened:

"Look out! Here they come up the hill!"

And with that came a rush of men to the brow of the hill, and fifty carbines were pointed at the fugitives, before they were recognized by the shout of George, who roared:

"It's friends, ye darnation fools! Can't ye see yer own uniforms?"

Then the weapons were thrown away, and the refugees climbed up, to be received with open arms by the soldiers, whom they found in a state of nervous anxiety and worriment, hard to realize in men who had come into the valley that morning, under the leadership of the best Indian-fighter on the plains, confident of victory.

The officers were gathered in groups, looking anxiously up the valley at the cloud of smoke and dust that still rose above the ravine where the death-struggle was going on, while the stout, dark-faced major, who had led the stampede that afternoon, was standing by the side of another officer of about the same figure, but with silvery hair that curled round his head like a glory.

The two kept apart from the rest, conversing in whispers, and when the young scout approached them, the dark-faced major looked round with a stern and ill-tempered expression, asking:

"What do you want here, you scoundrel?"

The young scout flushed deeply; but controlled himself sufficiently to say:

"I came to report, major, that there are some more men left in the woods, and that the general is over thar among the reds, and in danger. That's all, sir."

His words produced a singular effect on both officers, different from what he had anticipated. The stout major turned red and ordered him off with an oath; while the white-headed captain, with a bitter sneer, remarked as the young man walked off:

"Danger, is he? No more than we are. Those infernal scouts have a lot of cheek, haven't they?"

George Herrendeen—for such was the real name of the scout—walked away from the two officers with a bitter feeling at his heart, which found expression in his muttered words:

"They wouldn't have said that if the general had been *hyar*."

Then he went to the brow of the hill and watched the distant battle, which he knew must be going on, in silence, with a swelling heart.

That his sentiments were not unshared by the soldiers became evident by the muttered comments of more than one, as they stood there, watching the smoke and dust that rolled up to the sky.

"We ought to be there," muttered one fine-looking sergeant as he gazed.

"The general's catching blazes," said another, "and here we are, looking on, and letting the reds git away with him."

But still the commanding officer made no motion to go to the help of his sorely-tried leader, and still the men on the top of the hill waited idly, looking on at the smoke and dust till the sound of the firing died away in the distance, and they began to see black dots moving toward

them from the vicinity of the Indian village which finally became a regular line of warriors coming toward them.

Then, when it was too late, a company went down to meet the Indians, while the whole force of soldiers on the hill stood to their horses, and finally moved out to the support of the single company that had ventured out to meet the enemy.

Nevermiss George watched the whole proceeding with a frown on his brow, muttering:

"Too late now. They've got ye, boys."

So it proved; for in less than twenty minutes after the battle opened the whole force on the hill was driven back to the place from whence it had come and was surrounded, at the distance of about half a mile, by a circle of Indians who began to shoot with long-range rifles, and long before sunset, had the men on the hill hemmed in, with no way to escape, compelled to fight whether they would or no.

From that time, till the darkness brought with it silence and rest, the fire never ceased and during the whole time Nevermiss George fired but five or six shots, every one of which had brought down its man, wherever a head was exposed to view.

When the darkness concealed the field from view, the young scout sought repose on his blanket on which he was lying, looking gloomily at the stars above, when a soldier came to him and said in a low voice:

"The major wants to see you, George."

Nevermiss curled his lip in the darkness as he said dryly:

"Does he? Seems to me it's rather late. But I'll go to him. Whar is he?"

"Over yonder by the packs," answered the soldier, pointing to the dark outline of the rude breastworks that had been constructed with the loads of the pack-mules as they came up to join the command. The scout rose from his resting-place and said shortly:

"I'll go thar."

He went and found the stout, dark-faced major, in company with the white-headed officer, by the light of a lantern, carefully shaded behind a pack, the major writing, while the white-headed officer seemed to be criticising.

As the step of Nevermiss George sounded close beside them, both looked up, and the white-headed officer said sharply:

"Who the devil are you, and what do you want?"

George drew up his slight figure as he said:

"You sent for me. If you don't want me I can go whar I come from."

He had no idea that he was paraphrasing the words of Metamora; but the stout major relaxed his usually harsh and ill-tempered face to say:

"Oh, you're the scout they call Nevermiss. I want you to take a letter for me to General Terry. It's dark enough to get through, isn't it?"

George shrugged his shoulders.

"Dark enough, as fur as that goes; but thar's an Injun at every step of the way, and no white man could get through alive."

"Hem!" said the major with a sneer. "I thought you scouts prided yourselves on your courage. If you show the white feather, I suppose we shall have to wait."

The young scout shuddered slightly as he said:

"Major, afore we've done, I'll show you which of us two is the coward. Give me the letter."

CHAPTER III.

A PERILOUS ERRAND.

THE stars shone brightly in the sky and lighted the dark outlines of men and horses lying here and there, inside the breastworks, as Nevermiss George, his long rifle lying on his arm, stepped out from an opening in the breastwork, with the major's letter in the breast of his coat, and began to walk slowly out into the darkness.

The officer who had behaved so rudely to him in the insolence of authority, who had shown such cowardice in battle, and yet was so ready to taunt the young scout for hesitating to undertake a task from which the bravest man might have recoiled without shame, accompanied him to the edge of the works, and said to him, in a tone meant for one of condescending kindness:

"If you get through safely, I'll mention you favorably in my report, Nevermiss."

The scout turned round at the words, and pointed his hand into the darkness below him.

"What'll the report say about what happened down in the bottom, major?" he asked. "I don't want no mention in no report of yours. If the gin'ral has had harm happen to him, that's all I want to know, and when I know that, you'll be the one people won't call the bravest man round these diggin's. Good-night. Ef I find the gin'ral, I'll give the letter to him."

And with that he went off down the hill, well knowing that the country all around him was full of hostile and well-armed Indians, carrying the letter addressed to General Terry, who was supposed to be somewhere in the neighborhood.

As soon as he had cleared the vicinity of the works within which the soldiers had sheltered themselves so far, Nevermiss sunk down from the erect position he had at first taken, and threw himself flat on the ground at the top of the hill, looking down on the bottom in which the Indian camp had been pitched.

He knew from the ease with which he and his friends had traversed that bottom that the Indians kept a careless watch in that direction, thinking, no doubt, that none but a madman would take that way to escape.

Nevertheless, that way, and no other, was the one selected by Nevermiss for his daring expedition, for he knew that if he could get safely down the hill to the river, and into the bottom, he was likely to be outside of the circle of scouts that the Indians had thrown all round the soldiers.

Lying down on the ground, he began to roll his body slowly to the brink of the hill, and when he found himself on the slope toward the river, he slid softly down, stopping frequently to listen, but never raising his head above the tufts of grass that grew there, for fear it might be seen above the sky-line from below if any Indians should be there.

In this way he reached the brink of the river which he had crossed that afternoon, without seeing or hearing anything, and began to think he had escaped the worst part of his journey, when he was startled by the sound of voices and the trampling of horses' feet.

Nevermiss sunk down flat on his stomach in the midst of the rank grass that grew by the river, and watched the other side.

He could see hats, like those worn by the officers of the regiment; but the sounds of the voices had the peculiar musical intonation that could not deceive him. He knew that the men on the other side of the ford were mounted Indians, coming to join their friends, and could catch scraps of their conversation in the tongue of the Sioux, which he understood fairly well.

"What shall we do if the man with the guns that fire twice comes in the morning?" said one.*

"He is too far to be here in the morning," was the reply. "Buffalo Horn saw his camp before he came in, and he is on the Greasy Grass Creek, a full day's journey for their wagons from here. We shall have time to kill all the men on the hill before he comes, and then we can kill him too, and have quiet."

The scout heard a laugh from another man.

"We shall never have quiet till we go to the land of the White Mother," he said. "The White Mother does not want our land, and the Great Father does. She will give us all we want, and Tatonka Otakka says that we shall have to go there in the end. Come; what do we wait for? The Crazy Horse is waiting for us, and we must get into position for the morning."

Then Nevermiss heard the trampling and splashing of horses in the water close to him, and knew that they were going to cross the river, and perhaps ride over him.

Nearer and nearer came the trampling of the horses, and presently the daring scout saw the form of an Indian, tricked out in the clothing of one of the officers whom he had known to be with Custer when he started on his charge. The broad white hat and buckskin coat were not to be mistaken, even in the starlight, and Nevermiss shuddered slightly as he recognized the tokens that one, at least, of the brave men he had learned to love so well had perished.

He expected every moment to hear the frightened snort of one of the horses that would tell the Indians where he was; but it so happened that the wind came in a strong puff from the Indians toward him, as he lay.

He smelt distinctly the rank odor from their greasy persons; but the same wind carried off his own scent from the nostrils of the horses; and as the Indians went off down the river, skirting the edge to get round the flank of the soldiers' position, instead of trying to ascend the hill, he was soon relieved from all fear of discovery, and plunged into the stream himself, allowing the water to carry him down as he waded, half-swimming, till he reached the other side, at the foot of a steep-cut bank, at the top of which the very wood from which he had crept that morning towered darkly.

To scramble up the bank and hide himself in the wood was an easy matter, and then Nevermiss set to work to examine the position, and ascertain whether any of the men he had left behind him still remained there.

He hardly thought they would; but his steps were as cautious as if he had been treading on eggs as he stole through the wood.

For a long time he found nothing, and at last the light of the stars, gleaming through the branches, showed the scout that he had reached open ground.

He remembered every yard of that wood, from the way in which he had fought there that day. There was a little open glade in the

* The Indians call artillery using shells, "guns that fire twice," and fear them greatly. General Terry had artillery and Gatlings with him in the expedition of 1878. The "White Mother" referred to, is the title given by the Indians to Queen Victoria, just as they call the President the "Great Father."

middle, and it was not certain yet whether he had got there or to the edge.

Stealing cautiously forward, he soon saw that it was the glade, by the edge of which he stood. Several dark masses, still scattered about on the grass, he recognized as the bodies of men and horses that had been slain there at the beginning of the stampede.

The corpse of Bloody Knife, the Indian scout, whose brains had been dashed all over the major—the very thing which had frightened him so badly—was on the ground somewhere there, but he had no time to investigate. What he had to do was to skirt that glade and get to the edge of the wood.

He took his bearings from it, and soon found himself at the real edge of the timber, with the gleaming lights of the Indian camp-fires in the village visible beyond.

Now the most perilous part of his mission was to come.

He had no horse, and had deliberately made up his mind to penetrate the Indian herd, steal an animal of some kind, and trust to the darkness to cover him from pursuit.

Having lived among Indians since his boyhood, he knew that the savages of the plains are very superstitious in the dark, and do not like to hazard any fighting there on account of their belief that a man who is killed in the dark will remain in the dark for all eternity.

He stood there watching the camp-fires for a little while, and then struck boldly out into the bottom, walking as nigh to the fashion of the Indians as he could and skirting the village so as to get near the herd of ponies that he could hear snorting not far off.

As he had anticipated, the greater part of the warriors were on the hills on the other side of the river, employed near the soldiers, and the guard round the village was careless and slack.

The Indians, knowing that their only foes were safely corralled on the hilltop, had no apprehension that a man could be found bold enough to leave the breastwork.

Herrendeen had no difficulty, therefore, in getting nigh the herd of ponies, keeping on the further side, and found himself close to them with a rope in his hand which he had brought with him to halter a pony, when he was startled by the sight of a mounted Indian riding directly toward him, and hearing the cry in Sioux:

"Who are you, there?"

The quick-witted scout instantly answered in the same tongue, giving the name of a young brave that he had known pretty well on the reservation at Standing Rock, and whom he thought to be still there.

At the same time he drew his knife softly from his belt as the Indian rode up, and prepared for a death-stroke if he should be discovered.

But the name he had given seemed to disarm any suspicions that the Indian might have entertained, and he galloped up, exclaiming heartily:

"We are well met. How many scalps did you get from the men of the Long Hair to-day?"

"Seven," answered the scout. "Come and count them."

The Indian uttered an exclamation of surprise and incredulity.

"You are a liar!" he cried. "I was in the worst of it with Rain-in-the-Face, and he only got four. Where are your scalps?"

As he spoke, he reined up close beside the scout who had sunk down in the grass as if to pick up something he had dropped.

The next moment Herrendeen, with an active leap, had risen to his feet, grasping the arm of the warrior, whom he knew from his voice to be but a young man.

There was a dull thud and a strangled cry.

The Indian sunk from his saddle, stabbed to the heart, while his slayer, without waiting an instant, took hold of the bridle of the pony and vaulted into the saddle.

One instant he remained there listening, but not a sound told that he had been seen or heard. Then with an easy lop, like a scout on a trail, or carrying an order, he rode away from the village and struck off across the hills in the direction that he knew must be occupied by the troops of General Terry.

"It ain't no use tryin' to find Gin'r'l Custer," he said to himself sadly, as he rode on. "If that devil spoke true, and the others by the river, I much misdoubt the poor gin'r'l has gone whar no one kin help him. But he may have got off somehow, and if he be, and I find him, we may make it hot for 'em all yet."

He never hesitated a moment as to his direction, but traversed hill and valley, going north all the time, till the gray streaks of dawn told him that he would have to seek a place of concealment. When this came, he sought a high hill from which he could command a view of the country for miles round.

Riding round the base of this, he found himself in a small valley in which a little pool of water showed that a spring existed—a rarity in that country—and by this spring he tethered his pony and then crept to the top of the hill to take an observation as soon as it grew light enough to see anything.

He hid his head in a tuft of grass before the light grew strong, for he well knew that if he could see it was more than likely that some lurking Indian spy could also see him.

As the sun rose he scanned the prospect all round him, finding it perfectly solitary. The bare hills and the little green valleys nestling between them, the sage-brush, with its grayish hue, making everything look more desolate, was on every side.

It was only when he turned his eyes in the direction from which he had come that he noticed anything, and then he saw something that made him give a slight start and bring forward his rifle.

A party of Indians were coming on his trail, the leaders stooping from their saddles, peering at the ground as if picking up his tracks. Nevermiss George then realized that the body of the man he had slain had been found, and that his enemies were on his trail!

It was a symptom of the coolness which had gained him his title of "Nevermiss," that now, when he had a little time to himself, instead of taking the cartridges he wanted from his belt, he went into his big pouch and selected exactly the number he wanted, at the rate of one for each foe.

"It won't never do to miss one of 'em," he said, aloud, as he glanced from them to the rifle and back several times, screwing up his elevating sight and adjusting it as if calculating the distance. "Seven hundred and fifty yards ought to do it, I reckon."

Then he brought the rifle forward slowly in the cover of the grass, and leveled it on the leader of the Indians, who was picking his way carefully along at a foot pace, unraveling the trail. At last he seemed to have satisfied himself as to his aim, for he muttered:

"That'll do, I reckon."

As he spoke he put the spare cartridges that he had laid on the grass close to his left hand, and then renewed his aim.

There was a flash; a puff of smoke obscured the view; and when it cleared away, the Indians were fleeing in all directions, as if scared by the suddenness of the catastrophe that had overtaken one of their number.

But before that occurred a second cartridge had been put into the rifle, and Nevermiss was peering to the windward side, endeavoring to get a fair aim at one of his foes.

He had taken his aim at the right time, when the Indians were in an open plain, far from cover, and had shot down the leader, who lay by his horse on the ground.

And the best proof of the demoralization his shot had created was found in the fact that the Indians had not dared try and take away the body—a shameful proof of cowardice in their estimation.

The second shot of the dauntless scout was fired under circumstances of more difficulty than the first, at a running horse, and Nevermiss uttered an impatient "Pshaw!" as he saw the bullet knock up the dust under the feet of the animal at which he had aimed.

"It won't never do to miss 'em that way," he muttered, as he put in a third cartridge. As he saw them wheel about he hoped to get one more shot, but they had had too hard an experience of the unerring rifle to venture any such thing.

As they approached the hill they circled off, so as to keep at a safe distance, and the young scout, after a glance at his foes, said to himself, with an expression of strong disgust:

"They won't come near enough. Well, we must try what a quick shot will do at short range."

He threw his rifle over his arm and went down the hill to where his pony was cropping the grass under shelter of the ground. The animal seeing him come shied away to the end of the lariat and threatened to break loose, being only accustomed to Indian handling.

Herrendeen called to it in the Sioux language, soothing the creature till he could get hold of the end of the lariat, when he quickly drew it in to him, and as soon as the pony found that it had met its master it submitted to be bridled and mounted.

Nevermiss George left the top of the hill, riding away from the place whence he had descried the Indians, and as soon as he got into the next valley he set off at a lop, not hurrying his pony, but getting over a good deal of ground between that and the next hill.

Arrived there, he halted to look back, and saw that his pursuers had increased in numbers, more Indians in the rear having joined those in front, the whole coming on at a rapid pace, whipping their ponies, as if determined to catch him.

Now, indeed, the chase had begun in earnest, and the scout looked carefully to the condition of his horse as he plunged into the next valley and rode for the next hill.

He kept going toward the highest ground he could find, for he knew that if he left it to his foes, they might steal round him and get in his front, the thing of all others that he was anxious to avoid.

For three hours more, as far as he could judge by the height of the sun, Nevermiss kept up his

gallop to the northeast, and then, as he attained the top of a hill, he uttered an exclamation of relief, as he saw in the far distance some white specks, which he knew to be the tilts of wagons, and therefore belonged to the troops of which he was in search.

As he saw them he swung his hat and gave a cheer as he reined up at the summit of the hill, and at the same moment a faint crack, far in the rear, admonished him that his foes had begun to fire at him.

The sharp snap of a bullet, that knocked the dirt over his horse, proved that they had already come perilously near, and that he would have hard work to prevent them getting between him and the wagon. But he only muttered:

"That's the game, is it? Let's see who gets the best of it afore we git through!"

He saw that there was a spur of the hill on which he stood, which if he could reach he would be in a natural fort with a precipice on two sides, and a slope toward him. Resolving to get there and stand a siege, where he might have some advantage, he dashed across the interval that separated it from him, and had almost reached the top when the head of an Indian rose over it, coming from the other side, and in a moment he had reined up and had his rifle pointed at it.

The next moment he uttered a cry of surprise, as he realized that the strange Indian was a woman!

He was within fifty yards of her, and could see her rounded form, as she stepped out and stood on the summit of the natural fortress, looking at him as he reined in his horse as if she had been as much astonished as himself.

A woman, and a beautiful one too, judging from the grace of every movement. Yet that was not what claimed the attention of the amazed scout. He had seen many squaws, some handsome, others hideous, but none like this.

For she was appareled like a warrior, and a chief at that.

All in white, a sleeveless buckskin shirt half hid her slender figure, but her war-bonnet was dyed blood-red, and she carried a rifle, pistols, and a long lance, hanging from a loop on one arm, as she stared down at him. Her bare arms were nearly white, and the young frontiersman, who had never seen anything in his life so beautiful, could not find it in his heart to shoot, murmuring aloud:

"No, by gosh! I don't shoot a gal ef she don't shoot first. And she looks as ef she might be a friend."

With that thought, he rode straight toward her.

CHAPTER IV.

WHITE FALCON.

NEVERMISS GEORGE rode straight toward the girl warrior on the rock.

She, on her part, saw him coming, and seemed to be quite careless whether he came or not, for she turned her head from him and looked down on the other side of the hill-top, as if to see if she was followed.

When Herrendeen finally arrived close, she turned round to him, and said, in a commanding tone, something in a language that he did not understand, though he knew from the sound that it was French, which is talked, more or less, in the Northwest, by the descendants of the old French voyageurs and trappers.

He shook his head, saying:

"Don't understand what ye say."

The girl frowned and made a gesture, indicating that she wished him to go away; but as he saw that she did not threaten to use the rifle she carried, he rode up beside her, and saw that the Indians, who had been trying to intercept him, were at the foot of the slope on the other side of the hill, and preparing to ascend.

Were they enemies of the girl beside him or not? was the question that flashed through his mind, and as it did so, the girl herself said, in broken English, with a strong French accent:

"Viat you do? Moi Canadienne, fille de Grand Ours—dey Sioux—moi, j'ose les Sioux."

Again Herrendeen, though he did not know a word of French, made out that the girl told him "she hated the Sioux," and his tone was that of hearty acquiescence, as he replied:

"I hate 'em as bad as you do, miss. I'll see they don't come hyar now."

So saying, he dismounted from his horse beside the girl, who looked at him still, as if she suspected his motives, but hardly liked to open a fight with him before she had got rid of her other foes.

He saw that she did not like him, and to reassure her, pointed to the advancing Sioux, saying energetically, with much gesticulation:

"Me kill 'em for ye, miss. Me kill 'em for ye!"

And with that he leveled his long rifle over the top of a rock, and sent the foremost Indian from his saddle as he toiled up the slope.

This time, as he had foreseen when he first spied the rock, he had his foes at a disadvantage, for they had to come straight up a steep incline, and could not skirt round it.

The girl looked surprised at the way he shot,

and when he took a second cartridge from the loop in his belt and put it in the rifle, she uttered a cry of admiration, saying something in French which Herrendeen did not understand, but which he took to be words of approval.

The second shot brought down a second Indian; then the rest fled in confusion, when Herrendeen had time to observe the girl more closely, and noticed that her weapons were very different from his own, being of the old-fashioned muzzle-loading kind, which, together with her language, made him think that she must be one of the half-breed Indians from the northwest of Canada, whom he had often heard spoken of lately as being friends of Sitting Bull, and likely to receive him when he fled to the British dominions, as he had threatened to do more than once. The scout remembered, also, what he had heard from the Indians the night before, about "going to the land of the White Mother," and knew that the Indians meant by that term the queen of Great Britain. How this girl, so beautiful, had come to be so near the camp of the wild Sioux, and why she seemed to be afraid of the Indians, as much as of himself, he did not yet understand; but he was made to understand that she was grateful to him for what he had done, when she pointed to the distant Indians fleeing, and then to him, and said in her pretty, broken English:

"You goot! Ces sauvages la—dey—vat you call—dey keel me—dey—"

Then she seemed to be at a loss for a word, till he said, in his best Sioux:

"Do you not talk the language of the Sioux?"

She brightened up at this, and answered with fluency in that tongue:

"Yes, indeed! But who are you, and how came you here? I thought they were after me."

"After you?" he echoed. "Why should they be after you, and who are you?"

She erected her little head proudly as she said to him:

"I am the White Falcon, daughter of Big Bear, who rules over the Crees. My father is high in the favor of the White Mother, and he named me from the great white falcon that nests in the snows by the great sea, because I am white like her, swift like her, and can see far, like her. What is your name?"

He laughed as he gave her his English name, which she seemed to find difficult to pronounce; for she said with a smile that charmed the young man, from the contrast of its playful grace to anything that he had ever imagined of an Indian woman or a half-breed:

"That is a name I cannot say. I shall call you the Far Fighter, for you can shoot a long way. Where were you going, when I met you?"

He pointed over to the white tilts of the wagons in the distance, and said:

"Yonder, to the soldiers of the Great Father. I have a message to the chief, to tell him of the battle of yesterday."

The girl turned round and pointed backward in the direction from whence he had come, asking:

"Were you with the soldiers that were killed?"

He hesitated. "I was with some of them: but were you there, too? Did you come from the camp of the Sioux?"

She nodded her little head, and a look of strong disgust came over the beautiful face.

"I was there in the camp, when the soldiers first came. Those men were cowards. I saw them running myself, when, if they had known it, the Sioux were all fleeing like hares from a wolf. But the other men fought well."

Herrendeen eyed her with interest. He saw that here was a person who could tell him what had taken place in the camp, and asked her:

"Can you not tell me then, of the fight? Did you hear or see a chief with long hair, all yellow like gold, who was there?"

She shook her head.

"There was none with long hair there, though there was one they said had been a great chief, that had worn his hair long. But he was killed, with all the men that were with him."

The scout started at the news that came to him for the first time of the entire destruction of Custer's band of soldiers.

"You don't mean that they were all killed?" he said eagerly. "Surely some got away from there."

She shook her head again.

"Not one. Every man was killed. The Long Hair died last. I was there and saw him."

"You!" echoed the young man, incredulously. "What were you doing there? The Sioux do not let the women fight with them, do they?"

She curled her red lip with some disdain.

"I am no Sioux. I am a Cree, and white blood is in my veins—the blood of the White Mother, who lives beyond the sea. I follow no laws of the Sioux. My people dwell in the great plains, and ask no man's leave what to do with their own."

"Then how came you in the Sioux camp?" he asked, forgetting in his eagerness, to watch the enemies who had already annoyed him so sorely.

White Falcon shrugged her shoulders.

"The Sitting Bull sent word to my father that he was ready to come to the country of the White Mother, if the soldiers got too strong for him. He asked my father to send him some one with whom he could talk, who would tell him what the Crees would do. My father sent me; and I went. But I go back now."

"And why do you go back?" asked he.

"Because the Sioux are not like our people. We should not like them if they came, though my father is kind to all who are hungry. But the Sitting Bull wants too much."

There was an expression on her face as she said this that excited the curiosity of the scout, and he asked:

"What does he want, then?"

White Falcon curled her pretty lip.

"My father's tribe are rulers in their own land, and there is no one to make us afraid; but the Sitting Bull has nothing he can call his own. He has to fight for the meat he eats, and his young men are on the war-path all the time. And then he asked that I should be his wife! As if my father would give me to a man that has not a foot of land that his tribe can say, 'This is ours, and there is none to make us afraid.'"

Nevermiss George uttered a low whistle.

"And was that why you left the camp?" he asked.

At that moment the White Falcon pointed down the hill, without replying.

"They are trying to get us," she said.

He glanced that way and saw that the Indians had dismounted from their ponies—had made a circle at the foot of the hill on which he had taken his stand and were creeping up on all sides, as if determined that one man should not keep them from their prey.

He pointed his rifle at one of them, and the man instantly disappeared behind a tuft of bushes that grew round a rock, affording perfect shelter for him.

Then, as he looked for the rest, they had all disappeared; and he knew that they had taken cover with a skill that came of long practice, for there was hardly shelter, as far as could be seen, for a rabbit.

Presently came a yell from below and the whole party jumped up and made a rush, as if trying to provoke him to fire and throw away his shot.

But he was too wary for that.

He saw that they meant to dodge down if he fired, and that the chances were against his hitting any of them, so he reserved his fire, waiting for a better opportunity.

Presently he saw a feather come out over the top of a bush where an Indian was peeping, and he sent a bullet a little below the feather, which had the effect of making it disappear as quickly as if he had hit the man.

That he had not done this, however, he knew from the derisive yell which greeted the shot, and the immediate appearance of all his enemies, leaping up the hill, while his rifle was empty, to get another cover.

White Falcon's eyes flashed, and she brought forward her own rifle, a light piece, ornamented with silver, but of the old muzzle-loading pattern. This she leveled over the edge of the rock with a quickness and precision that showed her to be a skillful shot, and as the weapon cracked an Indian dropped on the hillside, and the rest sank into cover with a rapidity that made George, who had just reloaded, smile.

"Well done, White Falcon!" he said. "That was a good shot for a man, and still better for a girl."

She colored slightly, with a smile that showed the flattery did not displease her, as she said:

"In my country powder and lead are dear, and we cannot afford to throw away shots. The Sioux cannot shoot like the Crees."

Then she reloaded her rifle, adding, with a regretful glance at his handsome piece:

"If we had such guns as you have, we could drive our enemies like so many buffaloes."

As she stood there, reloading, Herrendeen saw an Indian taking aim at her exposed head, and quick as a flash he leveled his own rifle, and just as the Indian's piece spoke his own answered, and he had the pleasure of seeing the warrior take his death-leap into the air, while White Falcon was unhurt—the bullet having cut a feather from her war-bonnet, but did no other harm.

They had already reduced their foes from ten to six, and the girl said:

"If we were in my country, and had but one of my Crees, besides you, we would run down there and drive those dogs of Sioux away."

"If you want to do it," he answered immediately, "I am ready to take a run now. We can ride off behind the shelter of the hill and make a dash for the wagons out yonder before they can get us."

CHAPTER V.

A RIDE FOR LIFE.

WHITE FALCON heard what he said, and her voice had a regretful sound as she answered:

"If I had but my horse! But he is behind the Sioux. They are between him and me."

"Where is he?" asked George.

She pointed over the heads of the Indians to a neighboring valley, through which ran a small stream, the banks of which were covered with timber, much the same as the bottom in which he had fought the day before.

But between them and this cover lay all the Indians, and their ponies were feeding on the short grass, with lariats trailing, so that there was no chance for the two to get to the timber, without running the gantlet of the enemy.

Nevermiss frowned in perplexity as he looked over the hills that still lay between him and the distant white tilts of the wagons. They did not seem more than a mile or two away, but he knew that the clear atmosphere of the hills was deceptive, and that the tilts he saw might be anywhere from ten to twenty miles off.

The girl's eyes followed his, and as she saw the distant wagons, she said:

"Those are your friends, are they not?"

"They are if I can get to them."

"Would they hurt me if I went to them?" was her next question.

"My people never hurt women," he answered.

The girl shook her head.

"There you are wrong. They came into the midst of the women and children yesterday, and we had all we could do to drive them off."

"That was because we could not tell which was man and which woman," he replied. "If you go to the tents of my people yonder, and they know you to be a woman, they will not hurt you."

She seemed to be satisfied with what he said, for she looked round her at his pony, which he had tied in a place where it was sheltered from the fire of the Indians below.

"If you think you can trust me with him," she said, "I will go and get my own horse."

He shook his head.

"I don't think you could get to him, and if they killed you, I should have no horse."

He did not say, what was the fact, that he did not want this beautiful girl to leave him; but, unknown to himself, he was beginning to take a great interest in her, and did not like to have her exposed to danger.

The girl smiled with an air of some derision.

"You think I shall run away from you and go to them! Listen! I was in their camp yesterday, and if it had not been for the Cheyennes and Crazy Horse they would all have been killed. I led them when the men hung back. And what was my reward? The Sitting Bull wanted to keep me as his wife. I said nothing, but got up in the night and stole away. Now, they are after me, and want to take me back. I am not afraid they will try to kill me, but I will not go back with them. Therefore I want my horse to ride away. I left him there to rest, while I came here, when I heard your gun going off. Now, will you lend me your horse?"

If any one had told George Herrendeen, an hour before, that he would lend his pony to a strange Indian girl, at a moment's notice, when his life depended on getting it back, he would have laughed at them; but now he hesitated, colored, and at last said, in a bashful kind of way:

"If you want it you will have to take it. But, don't forget me when you get your own horse."

A bright smile lighted up the face of the girl as she answered:

"The man that trusts White Falcon never will be sorry for it. I will return."

She turned and mounted the pony.

In another moment she was sweeping down the steep hillside, in regular Indian style, as if it had been a level plain, and the moment her form was seen a yell arose, and every Indian started up to intercept her.

Nevermiss had been watching for this, and his rifle dropped one of them before they had time to realize their temerity.

The rest of them scampered away as hard as they could go toward their own horses, feeding in the bottom, and the young scout noticed that not a man fired at the girl, though they all seemed bent on getting to their horses to catch her. The chase became exciting, for the course taken by her converged toward that of the men; and the timber in which she had said that her horse was concealed was directly on the other side of the valley.

She reached the feeding steeds a trifle before their rightful owners, and as she passed by gave a whoop and waved her hand to set them off in a stampede.

The sight of the galloping horse and rider, with the cries of the girl, excited the ponies so that they all set off with trailing lariats, running up the valley, regardless of the calls of their masters, when the girl with a shrill whoop of triumph, turned in her saddle and fired a pistol right in the face of the nearest Indian, who immediately threw up his arms and dropped on the grass.

From that moment the passions of the Sioux seemed to be roused to vengeance, for they showed no more restraint; but bringing their short rifles to the front, poured a shower of bullets round her as she galloped toward the wood.

Herrendeen expected every moment to see her drop, but she gained the shelter of the wood and

disappeared, followed by the Indians, when a great yelling rose from the cover, with the sounds of shots, which lasted for nearly three or four minutes.

Then, out from the other side of the wood came the white figure on the pony, followed by another that galloped beside it, and White Falcon was skimming away toward the distant white tilts of the wagons, while the horses of the Indians that had been stampeded, were running to and fro at the end of the bottom, eluding the efforts of their riders to catch them, and Herrendeen said to himself with a groan:

"Gosh! why haven't I one of them myself? She'll never git back hyar alive. She'd be a fool to try it ef she did."

Hardly were the words out of his mouth when he saw the white figure swerve away in a circle, and knew, from the course she was taking that she was trying to get back to him.

A rapid glance round him showed that the Indians had split into two parties, part trying to catch their horses, the other part on the trail of the girl. The way to the wagons was left open to himself, if he only had a horse.

"I kin only risk it," he muttered.

Then, clutching his rifle, he ran down the hill, the Indians being all on the other, and in a few moments more he was dashing swiftly toward a spot from which he could intercept her path.

It was a long and hard run, but at last he came to a spot in the hills from which he could see the girl just below him, circling round to get back to the hill, not knowing he had left it; while two warriors who had caught their horses at last, were plying their whips as hard as they could, not a quarter of a mile in the rear, evidently thinking to overtake her.

He came out into view and shouted, and the moment she heard his voice she altered her course toward him.

Then he saw that she was riding his horse, while a handsome bay pony was following her like a dog.

In a few minutes more she was by his side, and leaped off, saying hurriedly:

"I could not trust this one to follow. Take him, and I will draw off the rest of them."

She was on her own pony in less time than he could mount, and was dashing off, when he called:

"Don't go there. There are only two of them, and I can finish them."

In fact, no sooner did the two men who were following her see that she had been joined by the scout, whose long rifle they had learned to dread so justly, than they turned short in their tracks and made the best of their way to the rear, whooping to their companions to come on.

White Falcon curled her lip as she saw them.

"They are Sioux," she said. "The Cheyennes are the only men who fight hard when they get the worst of it. Let us go. We shall get to the wagons now."

She rode off at a gentle pace, which Herrendeen was glad to imitate, for he found that the hard treatment his own pony had met with that morning had considerably diminished the activity of the animal.

They saw no more of their foes for nearly an hour, during which they rode among the hills in the direction in which they knew the wagons to be. When they at last topped a hill from which they could command a sufficient view, the white tilts seemed as far away as ever, but the Indians had gone back, and they could see them hovering on the tops of hills far away, watching the wagons, as if fearing to go any further in that direction.

White Falcon smiled proudly as she pointed to them.

"I told you we should get to the wagons. They have seen them coming, and they are afraid. But they will kill the rest of the soldiers, back on the hill, before these can get there."

Herrendeen shuddered slightly as he gave the rein to his horse.

"Do they think they will kill them all?" he asked, as he rode on more rapidly.

White Falcon nodded gravely.

"They cannot get away. The Sitting Bull has them in a trap; and the man who leads them is not a fighter, like the one that was killed."

The scout uttered a low groan as he agreed in the justice of her remark.

"Ay, ay, that's true as gospel. They'll git away with him easy enough if we don't git help to him quick. Let's hurry on."

They increased their speed and rode on, noticing that the wagons were moving toward them, as if on the march to meet them.

Notwithstanding they looked near, it took four hours' hard riding before they could distinguish the figures of men in blue, the glitter of arms, and saw the Indian scouts in advance of the column, coming down at a tearing gallop to find out who they were.

Herrendeen was hastening forward to greet them, when White Falcon reined in, and said abruptly to the scout:

"I have gone far enough with you. Those men are not of my tribe, and would shoot at me. I will go to my own people, and I shall be safe. If you come to the land of the White Mother, remember White Falcon. My father's

warriors shall know you, and give you a welcome. Farewell."

She was turning her pony to ride away, when the scout, who felt a strange flutter at his heart at the idea of losing his beautiful companion, cried out earnestly:

"Do not go, White Falcon! Not a man of them shall hurt you while I am here. I swear it."

The girl waved her hand to him, with a motion full of grace, as she answered:

"I have spoken. Farewell! When you come to the land of the White Mother you shall be welcome. See! Your men are angry already."

As she spoke came a crack from the distant Indian scouts, and a bullet went hissing near the figure of the girl, knocking up the dust at her pony's feet, and exciting Herrendeen to anger, so that he rode at speed toward the scouts, waving his hand, and roaring:

"Don't fire at us, you fools; we are friends!"

By the time he reached them, and exchanged the cautious greetings of the plains, showing them that he was a friend, and they had expressed themselves as satisfied to let him see the general, the girl had vanished behind the shelter of a hill, followed by three or four scouts who seemed to be suspicious of her.

Herrendeen took his letter to the commander of the soldiers, who read it, and asked at once how he had left the command and what had become of General Custer.

Nevermiss told what he had heard from the Indians while he was making his escape from the beleaguered camp, but said nothing of White Falcon, till the general asked him:

"Who was that Indian with you who rode off when the skirmishers saw you?"

He stared suspiciously at the scout as he spoke, for he shared the feeling, common to the army officer, who looks on a scout as something to be suspected till he has proven that he is entitled to credit.

Herrendeen looked the officer proudly in the face as he answered:

"That was a lady friend of mine, sir—White Falcon, the daughter of Big Bear, up in the Provinces."

"Big Bear, and who the deuce is he?" asked the general, screwing up his face doubtfully.

"Is he a Sioux or a Cheyenne?"

"Neither, sir. She told me he was a Cree, and that she was related to the White Mother; that's what the Injuns in Canady calls the British Queen, ye know."

The general laughed.

"Related to the Queen of Great Britain? A very likely story. That squaw has been giving you a fine story, Nevermiss. You must think us green if you expect us to believe that."

The scout colored. He was used to being spoken harshly to by army officers, it being an article of faith with many regular officers that scouts, as a rule, are not to be treated as honest men. He was a youngster, who had been but little with the army, and had not the prestige and renown that attaches to such names as Buffalo Bill or Texas Jack, though he could shoot as well as any of them, and lift a trail, too.

But he was not afraid to speak his mind, and he looked the general in the eye as he replied:

"I'm not askin' you to b'lieve anything, general. I tell ye what the lady told me; and maybe ye'll find out, some day, that all Injuns ain't the same. This one was different to any I ever seen. She told me she led the men in Sitting Bull's camp when the Sioux hung back; and I kin tell ye one thing, that they whipped the hull regiment that I was with; and ef you don't b'lieve that, you'll find it's true afore you go many miles. Shall I go back whar I come from, sir?"

The general shook his head.

"You'd best stay with us," he said.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HALF-BREED VILLAGE.

Two months after the battle of the Big Horn the prairies of the great Northwest looked their most beautiful, for the grass had a fresh verdure that is seen in no southern latitude so late in the year, and the climate was of a delicious freshness that gave the lie to the ideas of those people who imagine the British provinces to be the home of nothing but ice and snow half the year round.

It was the middle of August, and the country resembled a garden of flowers, so thickly were they strewed over the grass.

A range of low but rugged mountains ran from east to west, crowned to the summit with dark woods, and under the shadows of the woods ran a river that hurried from fall to fall, the rocks on either side being sheer precipices, five or six hundred feet at a drop, with caverns hollowed by the water, which produced all sorts of curious echoes as the cataracts dashed beneath and the echoes answered them in thunder tones from the cliffs, giving the river the name which has clung to it to the present day among the French half-breeds and settlers, who call it the "Qu' Appelle," or "Calling River."

Here and there, under the hills, one might see a cottage built of heavy logs and stockaded, as if the inmates were not always ready to trust their neighbors—the loopholes above the doors

and under the eaves all round showing that it was no uncommon thing for a rifle to be pointed thence; but the few people who were moving on the landscape seemed quiet and peaceable enough, though their peculiar dress, with its fur cap and worsted sash, the rifle invariably belted at the back, and the rest of the equipment—all told a story very different from that of the United States, even in the West.

By the banks of the river, at one place, stood what looked like a settlement of houses, from which the smoke rose on the evening air as the sun sloped toward the west, and it was toward this village, or hamlet, that the only traveler who was abroad seemed to be going.

A tall, heavily-built man, with a dark face, by no means unattractive; curly hair and sparkling black eyes; a short mustache of the hue of the raven's wing; the dress of a hunter, with a rifle and pistols at back and belt. He rode a stout pony, compactly built, and swept the landscape ahead as he went, with the sharp glance of a hunter who is always on the lookout for something.

He did not look exactly like a white man of pure blood, neither did he have the peculiar red hue of the Indian; while his beard forbade the idea that he was one of the latter race. In New York one would have taken him for an Italian or Spaniard, and remarked on the great brilliancy of his eyes, and the pleasant look on his dark face.

A Western man would have recognized him as one of those half-breeds who, in the United States, are supposed to have "all the vices of white and red, and none of their virtues," though in the British Provinces they constitute the majority of the inhabitants, in a country as large as any two States of the Union.

As he came near one might see, from the certainty with which he proceeded, that he knew every step of the way, and as he entered the precincts of the hamlet he was greeted by a number of dogs, who came barking and leaping round him as if they knew horse and master.

He halted before one of the low cottages, and a tall stout man came to the door and hailed him in French, saying heartily:

"Come in, Louis Riel. We have not seen you for a long time. Where have you been?"

Riel nodded familiarly as he dismounted from his horse, saying:

"I have been traveling, Philip Garneau, and have something to tell you. Have you anything to eat?"

The other half-breed laughed as he replied:

"That is a question for Riel to ask Garneau, truly! There is always something to eat for you in my house."

Then he put his fingers in his mouth and gave a shrill whistle which brought from the back of the cottage another man who came forward, took Riel's horse and led it away to a long shed, which did duty for a barn by the side of a row of haystacks.

Then the host took Riel into a large room with a floor of hard-beaten clay, small windows which could be closed from the inside, with the heaviest of shutters and which gave but little light in the room.

At one end was a huge fireplace, built of logs and clay, and the walls were hung with the weapons of the owner and trophies of the chase, making the whole resemble a hunting-camp more than the living room of a civilized being. A large square table in the center was bare of anything, but at the whistle of the host, who seemed to be chary of words, a couple of women, whose dark, square faces and high cheekbones proclaimed their Indian origin, came in and spread it with food in a very short time. The food was of the plainest description, being a sort of stew of pieces of beef and corn, hastily warmed up at the fire which burned in the huge fireplace, in which hung a big iron pot. Riel appeared to be used to the fare, for he made no complaints, but devoured his share with an appetite that showed his long fasting.

While he was eating, a number of men, all of the same dark complexion and curly black hair, with the most brilliant of black eyes—all dressed in the same picturesque costume, with the sash round the waist, containing a knife and pistols—came in and greeted the visitor cordially, but waiting till he had finished his meal before they troubled him to speak.

Riel nodded to each as he entered, but said nothing till he had eaten enough for two ordinary men, when he leaned back in the big wooden chair in which he had been sitting, and remarked piously:

"Thanks to the Mother of Heaven for a good meal! Now, brothers, let us have a smoke."

There was a grunt of assent, and every man brought out of his pocket a short briarwood pipe, that looked as if it had been used for years, and had come from a single pattern. Each man produced a plug of tobacco, as black as jet, and a jack-knife, with which he proceeded to shave off particles of the dark, sticky stuff, that looked as if the last thing in the world that it would be guilty of would be the act of burning.

Then Riel raked in the hearth for a hot coal to put on his pipe, and had to light it three or four times before it would burn, while his

neighbors did likewise. It was three or four minutes ere the pipes were lighted and in full blast, and all that time not a word was uttered, as if they were performing a religious ceremony which could not be disturbed without profanation. When at last the whole party was suited, and the room full of strong smoke from the stale old pipes, the half-breed chief spoke:

"Brothers, there is a great time coming for us."

Nobody seemed to doubt it, for the black eyes flashed with pride and Garneau said emphatically:

"We know it, and are prepared to fight for it." Riel looked satisfied at the answer.

"Philip Garneau is right. If we want it, we must fight for it. I have been in the country of the Yankees, and I have seen the man who has defied them all. The Sitting Bull is coming to our country."

The news produced a movement of interest in the men who sat round him—some on logs of wood, some on stools, and one or two on the few chairs that graced the cottage.

One man, with a red worsted cap on his head, in place of the usual fur arrangement, leaned forward to ask Riel:

"Are you sure he will come? He has been talking about it so long."

Riel frowned at the speaker in a manner that showed he considered the question an impertinence.

"Maxime Lepine," he said severely, "when I say a thing, it is generally true. The Sitting Bull is coming here—nay, he is across the border by this time, with seventy lodges of his friends and three hundred more to follow as fast as they can come."

But Maxime Lepine seemed to be disinclined to yield to the authoritative manner of Riel, for he retorted:

"Yes, that is all very well; but why did he not come before, when he said he would? We might have had the whole summer before us, but now we are too late to do anything, till the spring comes."

"I will tell you why he did not come," answered Riel, severely, "and do you, Maxime Lepine, and other men like you, take warning from what I say: The Sitting Bull is a great warrior, while you men have never fired at a mark that shoots at you in return. With such a man at our head, and his warriors to help us, we can do what we will with the White Mother and all her soldiers, and set up our own country, as it was before the white men came here. But the Sitting Bull is a great warrior, and he should be treated as such. He demands a wife from our people, and he has said that he will have none but White Falcon, the daughter of the Big Bear, chief of the Crees. She was at his camp at the time when he slew all the Yankee soldiers under the Long Haired chief, and she, being a fool of a woman, who has too high an opinion of herself, ran away from his camp, when he told her that she must be his wife, and went over to his enemies. She was guide to a white hunter, who fled from his camp to the soldiers who were coming to hunt the Sitting Bull. Thanks to her, the soldiers made him move his camp and flee north, while they have been hunting him ever since, with men like the blades of grass in number, till he has come at last to the borders, and will have all his people in our country very soon. Now, brothers, what say you to a girl that would join the white men against her own people?"

From the lowering glances of the men in the circle, it was evident that they had a very unfavorable opinion of such a girl; and even Maxime Lepine growled.

"Oh, if that's the case, it's different. But I had an idea that he did not come here because he wanted to stay with the Yankees."

Riel shook his head.

"It is no such thing. He would have been here long ago; but it is not befitting the dignity of a great warrior like him, that, when he asks the daughter of another chief in marriage, she should refuse him. I have seen him, and he says if we will give him the White Falcon as a wife he will stay with us and show us how to fight our foes. What say you, brothers? Ought he not to have her?"

There was a unanimous murmur of assent, and only Maxime Lepine, who seemed to be the malcontent of the party, ventured to remark:

"But if the Big Bear will not give her to him, what then? He is very fond of the child, and she has the blood of the White Mother in her veins, as we all know—"

"So much the more reason that she should go to the race of her mother, for a husband," said Riel, emphatically. "We have two races here; the white and the red. The red-men are our friends; but the whites hate us. We and the red-men must keep together, and fight against the whites, or they will drive us out of our country as they have driven every red-man from the country of the Yankees. I have come to ask which of you will go to the camp of Big Bear and tell him, from all the half-breeds of Manitoba, that he must give his daughter to the Sitting Bull to cement the alliance between us."

The question produced a silence, and the leader, seeing the hesitation of his friends, added:

"I have been to every village but this, and have got the consent of all. If Philip Garneau is willing to go with me, it is enough."

Philip Garneau coughed as he said, slowly:

"I am willing to go; but have you reflected that Big Bear is a great chief, and a friend of the Poundmaker? Suppose he refuses, what shall we do? For he is a strong man, and if he gets in a passion about this thing he may give trouble."

Riel smiled, with an air that showed that his power among the half-breeds had not been acquired entirely by the charms of physical superiority, though he was a tremendously powerful man, and skillful at all warlike exercises. He could be as diplomatic as an Italian cardinal on occasion if he chose, and he chose now, as he said:

"I will undertake to persuade him to that end, brothers. All I ask is that you should say to me: 'Louis, we authorize you to say to the Big Bear that we wish him to give his daughter to the Sitting Bull.'"

The murmur of assent became one of relief, as the half-breeds found how little was needed to please Riel, and even Maxime Lepine growled:

"Oh, certainly; we are all in favor of that, if it can be done peaceably. But, when it is done, what is to come of it?"

Riel's eyes flashed like live coals, as he retorted:

"What is to come of it? You are always asking that, and you know well enough what we all want. We are ruled by men sent by the White Mother, who know nothing of what we want, and care less. We get a few presents every year, and in the mean time the men with spy-glasses are coming into the country, and setting up stakes to mark out one of their iron roads. Where shall we be when that comes through our country? We shall be, as the red-men in the Yankee country have been, driven out to starve; all the buffaloes will be killed, and nothing put in their place. There is but one way we can end the fight, and that is to throw off the White Mother, and make a country of our own, calling on the Great Father at the South to help us. The same Yankees that have hunted the Sitting Bull from their own country will help us to get back ours from the soldiers of the White Mother, and we shall—What is that noise out there? Out! A stranger!"

His speech, which he had intended to be so eloquent and convincing, was cut short here by a tremendous racket outside, the dogs barking savagely, as if attacking some one, while the boys of the village were yelling and hooting, as if they enjoyed the fun.

The noise was the sure mark of a stranger, who had been recognized by the keen scent of the dogs, as not belonging to the red race, and when the half-breed conclave rushed out of the cabin, disturbed at their plotting, they fully expected to see one of the mounted police, who roam the country, and against whom the dogs are trained to give warning.

Instead of this, a young man in the buckskin dress with gay fringes on the sleeve and cape, that mark the American from the French trapper, was sitting on his horse outside the cabin, in the middle of the village, and, as they came out in a rush, he called in English:

"Well, you're a fine lot of fellows, to set dogs on a stranger, jest because he wants to git a night's lodgin'. Who's the boss, 'yar?"

A strikingly handsome young man, with clear blue eyes and long fair hair, yet his complexion and appearance were so different from those of the men round him that he looked as if he had dropped from a different world altogether.

Riel, who, from having a far better education than the majority of his ignorant and superstitious comrades, understood English and spoke it pretty well, stepped forward, asking:

"Vere do you come from, sare?"

"Come from Yankeeland, to be sure," was the reply, with a slight smile. "Can't ye see that in my rig? You don't have none sich up hyar, do ye? I'm looking for a place called Eatoouche, and I thought mebbe you could tell me whar it was."

Riel smiled.

"Dis is Batouche, monsieur. You 'ave friend 'ere?"

The young stranger shook his head.

"Nary friend that I know of, musseer! But I h'ard of the place from fellers that's traded hyar, from the States. Isn't the Cree country off to the north of this?"

"Yaas," answered Riel, eying the other narrowly, as if to discover what he could mean by his questions. "Vat you vant to know about dat?"

"Well," returned the young man, who did not look much over twenty-three or four, "I'm going to see the chief of the Crees, a man they call Big Bear. Do you know him?"

The other half-breeds only half understanding the conversation, yet caught the name of Big Bear and looked at each other, muttering:

"Qu'est ce qu'il dit du Grand Ours?"

"What does he say of the Big Bear?"

Riel eyed the stranger still more narrowly, as he asked him:

"Vat you vant of Big Bear?"

Dakota George, the Dead-Shot.

The young stranger laughed.

"My name's Nevermiss George, and I made the acquaintance of his daughter, a few months ago. She told me to come and call on her, even I got into this part of the country, and hyar I be. P'raps ye know the lady. Pretty as a pieter-name of White Falcon."

Again all the half-breeds looked at each other and muttered:

"*Qu'est ce qu'il dit de la Fauconne Blanche?*"

"What does he say of the White Falcon?"

Riel's black eyes glowed like live coals as he asked the young stranger:

"Den you are de man vat did take de soldats to hunt de Seeting Boola—aha?"

Herrendeen caught something in the tone of his voice and the expression of his face that made him uneasy, and as he glanced round at the dark faces of the half-breeds, he found that every man was scowling at him, while Riel, after his question, turned to them and began to talk in his rapid and voluble French, telling them what he had just heard of the young man before them.

Herrendeen, growing still more uneasy as he saw the glowering way in which they had received the news of his identity, gathered up his reins and called out to Riel:

"I don't want to stop at your old village, but if ye'll tell me the way to Big Bear's camp, I'll take it as a favor. Which way is it?"

Riel turned from where he was speaking, and favored him with a strange, ominous glance, as he said slowly:

"*Etes note necessaire dat you go to de camp de Big Bear, mon ami.* You go right back to de countree vat you come from, and it will be better for you. De Big Bear ho do not like de Yankee, and de countree is not 'ealt'y for you. You go back vere you come from!"

Herrendeen colored as he retorted:

"I'll do no such thing. I came here to see the White Falcon, and I'm not going back till I have. Who the deuce are you, anyway? You ain't the king of this country, and if you don't like to tell me the way, I'm going myself. Good-evening!"

With that he wheeled his horse and rode off, leaving the circle of half-breeds glowering at his retreating figure, while Maxime Lepine growled out:

"Best put a bullet through him to save trouble."

"That will not do. The cursed police are too thick round here. Bullets make noise. I'll make him wish he had never come here after White Falcon. Give me my horse, Garneau."

Five minutes later he was riding on the track of the young scout.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CREE CAMP.

At the moment when George Herrendeen rode off from the half-breed village, on his quest for the White Falcon, he did not know that the camp of the great Cree chief was pitched not many miles away, in company with that of the equally powerful and celebrated chief of the Stono Indians, who went by the name of the "Poundmaker," from the huge traps he was in the habit of constructing for game in the great fall hunts.

He felt decidedly uneasy about the half-breeds who had been scowling at him; the more so, that he did not understand their language, and the remarks they had made about him were therefore all the more mysterious and dangerous.

He had about an hour before the sun would set, and as he had heard, on the way, that the Cree country was somewhere to the north of Batouche, which he had just left, he made up his mind to camp out where he could procure wood and water, and trust to luck to finding the Indian chief.

He looked back once or twice at the people he had left, half expecting to see some one following him; but no one was in sight when the village disappeared behind a knoll covered with wood, and before him spread a broad green plain, such as he had never seen in the plains of Dakota, where the ground is generally a wilderness of dust, cracked into the well-known "Bad Lands," and where the old ideas associated with the word "prairie" are entirely lost in a barren expanse more resembling a brick field.

But here there burst on the delighted eyes of the young scout a grassy plain, as flat as a table; the richest verdure, vivid in hue and spangled with flowers, covering it on all sides, so that it was a veritable sea of grass.

And out in the midst of this grassy sea, like a fleet of ships on the ocean, rose at a distance the outlines of a great Indian encampment, such as he had never seen before.

He had met Sioux and Arapaho, Cheyenne and Apache, and had slept in their tepees many a time; but such a camp as this he had never seen before.

It was larger than anything he had come across, and even at the distance at which he was he could see that it was arranged with a neatness and order such as is never seen among the wild rovers of the American plains in the Union.

The usual herd of ponies was feeding near the encampment; but the guards round them had a brightness of appearance and apparel that was unlike the dirt and squalor he had learned to associate with the idea of Indians.

Beyond the encampment, and ten or twelve miles off at least, though it looked nearer in that clear atmosphere, stretched a dark line on the green of the prairie that puzzled him somewhat.

It did not seem to be wood or water; and, had he not known that Indians are not prone to anything in the shape of a fence, he would have thought this a fence of some sort.

Whatever it might be, his own concern was with the encampment, first; and straight toward it he rode. He knew it must probably be that of the Cree chief, and wondered what could be the cause of the surly behavior of the half-breeds in the village, so near by, that they would not tell him of its presence.

His heart began to beat hard as he approached the camp, for he hardly knew what would be his reception. He had come at the invitation of the chief's daughter, it was true, after a fashion; but there was something in the ulterior object of his expedition, which he knew, were it discovered, would not be likely to add to the cordiality of his reception.

Whatever that might be now, however, there was no going back. He knew that he had been seen, long before, by the keen-sighted Indians; and that, in all probability, they were debating who he was and how he came there.

Steadily he rode on till he became aware that some one was coming to meet him, and pretty soon had resolved it into a party of men in the scarlet coats of soldiers, mounted on gray horses and carrying long lances, with streaming pennons of white and red.

Such a sight he had never seen before near an Indian camp; for these men were evidently soldiers of civilization, and yet on friendly terms with the Indians.

Behind the lancers he could see quite a crowd of Indians in gay scarlet blankets, white, green, blue and particolored garments, and mounted on all sorts of horses, mostly spotted like leopards, as they came cantering over the level prairie, careering to and fro as if for fun, and every now and then firing their guns in the air, while the red-coated soldiers came on more deliberately and quietly.

At last they were close enough for him to distinguish faces and figures, and he saw that the soldiers were led by a tall and very fine-looking officer, whose appearance was full of the dignity that has such an effect on savages.

As the scout came up, this officer eyed him gravely and gave a stiff sort of a nod to him.

"Where are you going, my man?" he asked.

Nevermiss took off his hat with a polite bow, in the style to which he was accustomed on the plains where he had been brought up, and said:

"Good-day, sir. I come here to see the chief of the Crees, one Big Bear, if it ain't ag'in' the rules."

The officer eyed him from head to foot, as if he felt doubtful of his answer.

"It's against the rules, of course," he said; "and especially for people from the States. You come from there, don't you?"

Nevermiss smiled rather proudly.

"Sartainly I do, sir. My name's Nevermiss George Herrendeen, and I hail from Dakota."

"Then what are you doing up here?" asked the officer, coldly. "I'm Major Roberts of the Northwestern Mounted Police, and it's my business to take care of our red friends. We don't want any Yankees coming here to put bad notions in their heads, I can assure you."

"And I ain't come to put bad notions in any man's head, be he white or red," retorted George. "I met the chief's daughter a few weeks ago, in Dakota, and she invited me to come hyar and see her father. That's all, sir."

Major Roberts looked more disagreeable than before.

"I'm afraid I shall have to send you back," he said, slowly. "Strangers are not allowed here in the Indian camps except with a pass from the chief of police. We have nothing but trouble from all the Yankees that come here, anyhow. What do you want with Big Bear?"

Nevermiss looked at the soldiers, and then at their officer for a moment, and said to the major in a low voice:

"If your honor would give me a few minutes alone, I could tell you something that would show you that I ought to come in."

The major made a sign to the men with him, and they instantly reined in their horses and turned round to ride away.

The Indians, who by this time had come up to the number of some fifty or sixty, hung round at a distance of some hundred yards, and gazed curiously at the stranger.

They saw the major and the scout in earnest conversation with each other for a short time, and the stranger seemed to be telling the officer something that amazed him greatly.

The conference lasted for nearly five minutes, and then Major Roberts was heard to say to the stranger:

"You can enter the camp if you wish, and I hope you will have good luck; but I have not much belief that you will. The general's letter

is all that you need for me. But you will find the chiefs harder to deal with than I am."

"I'm willin' to take my resks," the soldiers heard the young man say.

Then he and the major rode back in the direction of the camp together, and the Indians, who had been waiting their cue whether to welcome the stranger or not, began to ride in circles at a gallop, firing their guns in the air and yelling as loud as they could, with a view to discompose the nerves of the visitor, for they sent the bullets from their rifles whistling most uncomfortably close to his head.

But Nevermiss was used to Indian ways enough to keep as cool as an icicle through all the fusillade, and even Major Roberts, who apparently had all the dislike of a Yankee which is so common in Canada, could not avoid an approving nod, as he remarked:

"You're a cool hand, young man. You'll need all the pluck you have got before you get through."

George smiled as he looked round him at the savage-looking Indians, who were riding near to him, trying how close they could shoot without hitting him.

"These fellers shoot a heap better'n the Sioux," he said, quietly. "Thar's some fun in havin' them round a man. Do your folks let 'em have all the ammunition they want?"

The major smiled in his turn.

"All they can pay for. We give them lots of presents, you know; but there isn't a modern gun in their camp. Your folks, they tell me, let the Indians have the best, and give the old-fashioned guns to the soldiers. We reverse the thing here, you know, and it's ever so much less trouble."

Then George, who was looking ahead, felt his face glowing, as he saw a white figure that he remembered well, coming at a gallop over the green plain toward him, on a bay pony.

"Isn't that White Falcon?" he asked.

Roberts nodded.

"That's the girl. Rather a different sort of person from the daughters of chiefs you have in the States, isn't she?"

Nevermiss was puzzled at his tone, and asked:

"How so, sir?"

The major laughed.

"Well, for one thing, that girl was educated at Montreal, and she could take her place in a palace as well as many white women. She can talk French as well as her own language; she is a good musician; she rides like Diana, shoots like the best warrior of them all, and the wild Indian in her tribe respects every word she utters as law. That's what blood does."

Herrendeen was about to ask another question, when the girl herself came dashing up at full speed, and checked her bay pony close to him, saying in the Sioux tongue:

"You are welcome, Far Fighter. You have kept your promise to come and see my father, and we will keep mine to bid you welcome."

Then she turned to the Indians, who were all agape to hear her speaking to this stranger as if she knew him, and cried out:

"Men of the Crees, this is the Far Fighter of the Dakotas. The White Falcon was alone, and her enemies were pursuing her. The Dakotas, that had asked for our help, were pursuing her to make her a slave, when this man came to her help, with his rifle, that shoots so far that none can see the mark he aims at. He is the friend of White Falcon and of my father. He shall be your friend, too."

The moment she had said that, came a wild burst of yelling, and the Indians redoubled their firing round the heads of the girl and their new guest, till Major Roberts, who seemed to be satisfied now that all was right, turned his horse and rode away, leaving White Falcon and her men to escort the stranger into the camp of the confederated Indians.

George Herrendeen, as he followed the girl into the camp, was amazed at everything he saw, different from what he had been accustomed to associate with the name of Indians.

The tepees were neat and orderly; there were no vile odors around; and the offal that is apt to accumulate in an Indian camp seemed to be taken out of this one. The lodges were white for the most part, and decorated with designs in color, such as are only seen on the dwellings of the richest chiefs in the States. Altogether the Indians of Big Bear seemed to be as happy as any he had ever seen.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE COUNCIL.

WHEN the sun set that evening, Nevermiss, the scout, was installed in a huge tepee made of buffalo-hides from which the hair had been removed, the surface being painted over with all sorts of symbolical representations, which the young man but partly understood.

It was more of a pavilion than a tepee, and supported on several poles with an open doorway in which he was seated, surrounded by the dignitaries of the two tribes gathered to bid him welcome.

White Falcon herself, on terms of equality with the warriors—a thing he had never seen before in an Indian tribe in the case of a woman—was seated on a rug of wolf-skins, while

by her side sat her father, the renowned Big Bear—a man of great size, with the shoulders of a Hercules and the grave face of one who was used to being obeyed at his lightest word.

Big Bear was attired in the gifts that had, but a few days before, been received from the British Government—a fact which explained the unusual splendor of the appearance of the whole camp, which Herrendeen had thought their everyday habiliments.

Opposite to him, in the circle which was gathered round the guest of the evening, was another Indian, very tall, and rather slighter in figure than the head of the Crees.

His face expressed more intellectual power than that of Big Bear, with a sternness, not to say ill-humor, as he looked at Herrendeen, that the young stranger had not failed to notice.

This was the head of the Stone Indians, the great "Poundmaker," who had constructed the inclosure which Herrendeen had seen as a dark line on the prairie, and into which the game of the fall hunt was shortly to be driven.

Poundmaker sat stuffing a pipe and speaking little; while the warriors round listened to his words, when he did speak, with remarkable respect.

Big Bear, however, appeared to be the acknowledged chief of all there; for he it was who gave orders which were always obeyed.

The sun had just set, and the rays of the full moon were shining in at the front of the great sacred tepee in which the stranger had been installed as the guest of the tribe, when Big Bear said slowly:

"Men of the Crees, this young man who has come to us is a friend, for he has saved our child in the time of need. He has come here to ask of us a favor. The Crees have ruled these plains since the days before the white men came to the land, and they boast that they never sent the stranger away empty. Shall we hear the stranger or not?"

His speech was listened to in silence, and a pause of nearly a minute was allowed by Indian etiquette before any one answered.

Then Poundmaker said slowly:

"The stranger is one of the men who have driven the red-man from his home in the South. What can we have to say to a man who is the foe of our brothers in the South?"

They all used the Dakota tongue, which Herrendeen understood well, it being a dialect of their own, and when words failed employed the sign language.

The Indians slowly turned their glowing eyes on the scout, who saw that he was expected to answer. He looked at Big Bear, and the chief made a sign for him to go on.

"The Poundmaker is a great chief," said Nevermiss, in a conciliatory tone. "But he has not been in the South, as I have. If the red-men in the South were the same as the red-men in the North, we should have no trouble with the Dakotas. But they are not. The Dakota is a man who fights, worst of all, with his own color. Their tribe kills the Pawnee wherever it finds him, and the great Crow nation is in enmity with the Dakotas at all times. We in the South live in peace with the Crow and Pawnee. They have white chiefs among them, and their men are friends of the whites, just as you are the friends of the White Mother here. The Dakota is a wolf that all men hunt. He has even hunted the daughter of your chief here, and I did what I could to save her. Therefore I say that I am the friend of the good Indian, and have shown it, while the Dakota is the foe of the good Indian, and the friend only of the Cheyenne and Arapaho, who are dogs and wolves."

Then the young scout leaned back and puffed at his pipe, waiting to see what the Poundmaker would answer, for he saw, from the expression on the Indian's face, that he was the one who was going to give him the most trouble.

Big Bear nodded his assent to what Nevermiss had said, and responded:

"Our ears are open to what the Far Fighter has said, and his tongue is straight. I sent my daughter to the camp of the Sitting Bull, offering him peace and friendship, and she had to flee in the night, like a hare that is afraid of the wolf. The Far Fighter has spoken well. Let us hear what the Poundmaker has to say against him."

This was a direct challenge to the Stone chief, and his face contracted into a slight frown as he heard it.

But he never forgot his dignity so far as to interrupt, and waited a little longer than the full interval before he said:

"The stranger has spoken well, and his words are good, if they are true. But, why did the White Falcon leave the Dakota camp when the enemies of the red-man were close by?"

White Falcon herself raised her hand defiantly and answered at once:

"I left the camp because the chief wanted to make me one of his wives, whether I wished or not. Who is this Sitting Bull that he should aspire to take the child of the White Mother to his tepee? Did he offer my father a thousand ponies for me? He is a man that cannot look over his own plains and say these are mine. He has but

what the white men are pleased to leave him, when he might be like the Crows and the Pawnees, living in peace with them."

Then she looked at Poundmaker, as much as to defy him to answer what she had said.

The chief did not reply for nearly another minute, and then he said:

"I have a friend who has come to my tepee, and who is known to you all. He is one of us, and wishes to speak on this subject. I ask Big Bear if I can send for him."

There was an almost imperceptible movement in the circle of Indians, who slowly turned their glowing eyes on Big Bear and White Falcon, as if they doubted what answer would be given.

The Cree chief bowed his head slowly.

"The friends of Poundmaker are our friends. He will be welcome. What is his name?"

Poundmaker allowed a slight, triumphant smile to cross his face as he answered:

"It is Louis Riel. He has been in the South, as well as this stranger, and brings us news from the Sitting Bull which will make all your hearts glad. Let the Red Arrow go fetch him."

He indicated, by a nod, a young Indian, who rose and made a profound obeisance to the chief and then took his departure.

Herrendeen could not help casting a glance at White Falcon, but the face of the girl was an impenetrable mystery to him, and he could make nothing of it.

There was a profound silence, lasting several minutes, and then came striding over the grass to the front of the tepee a figure which the scout recognized as the big half-breed who had answered him so sullenly when he first entered the village of Batouche.

Louis Riel was attired in the dress habitual with the hunters of that country, and though he had left his rifle behind him, in deference to the council, his pistols were in his belt, and he had a defiant air about him that boded trouble in the conference.

But he bowed his head to the chiefs present with politeness and dignity, and took the seat to which he was motioned by Big Bear, who had the air of a person who does not exactly like the new guest, but will not show any rudeness to him.

Poundmaker was the first to speak.

"Our brother, Louis Riel, is here," he said, in French, which the Indians appeared to understand as well as their own language. "He has been to the South, from me, to speak to the great Sitting Bull, and has brought a message from the chief, who is at war with the whites. Can he speak in freedom what he has to say?"

He looked straight at Big Bear as he spoke, and the gigantic chief bowed his head.

"Louis Riel is welcome. Let him speak the words he has brought from Sitting Bull."

His answer was made in French, and Herrendeen bit his lip as he saw that the rest of the council was likely to be a sealed book to him, from his want of knowledge of the language.

Louis Riel began in French:

"My brothers, you know who I am. My father was white; my mother was of your race; and the white men look down on us because we are half red, my brothers and myself. Therefore we are one with you: for the mother is nearer than the father, and we cling to our mothers. I have been to the South to see the man who has fought the whites without rest; and he has bid me welcome. I was in the camp of the great Sitting Bull, the man who slew the greatest warrior that the white men had—the terrible Long Hair. The Sitting Bull fought him and slew him, but his foes are as the blades of grass in the plain for number, and the time has come when the Sitting Bull has declared that he is ready to enter the land of the White Mother, and be with us forever."

CHAPTER IX.

THE HALF-BREED'S PLOT.

The tidings given by the half-breed produced a sensible effect in the circle, and Riel saw that his news was welcome, so that he went on with confidence.

He cast a glance round him, and continued:

"We are alone here, or I could not speak what is in my heart. The men of the police are in their own camp, and there are none here to carry the tale to them. But there is a stranger in the camp: a man from the South. Can he be trusted or not? We trust none but those who belong to us; and we keep still when the soldiers are in the camp."

The question caused several Indians to look at the scout, and Herrendeen to feel uncomfortable; the more so that he did not know what the other was saying.

Big Bear waited as Riel paused for an answer: and when he spoke it was in the Dakota tongue so that the scout might understand it.

"Louis Riel has asked whether the white man who has come from the South can be trusted to keep the secrets of his red brothers. Let the white man answer."

Riel frowned and interrupted, before Nevermiss could speak, with a rudeness that would have shocked the Indians at any other time:

"We are not speaking to the white man, but to men of our own race. The white man can speak if he pleases; but we all know that the

word of a white man from the South cannot be trusted. I ask the Big Bear if he can trust the man or not; and he is the man who must answer for his friend, and not another."

Big Bear frowned haughtily.

"Louis Riel forgets himself. The white man is in my guest-tepee, and can speak for himself. Let him speak, and let Riel be silent till he has spoken."

The pointed rebuke brought an angry flush to the dark cheek of the half-breed; but he said no more, and took his seat, while Nevermiss, to whom all looked, spoke out.

"I have come here from the South," he said, "to warn you that the Sitting Bull, who is the enemy of his own race, and a bad Indian, is coming to try and carry off from your tribe its best prize. What I hear and see in this camp will be locked in my breast; no man shall hear it. Let the man I see before me speak, and say what he has to say against me; I am ready to answer. I came here, invited by the child of your chief and as the friend of all here. I do not understand the language of the French in which he speaks; and he may be telling of me things which are not true; but I will answer the things that I know. If the Sitting Bull comes here, he will come to make you trouble; and the Great Father in the South will be angry with the White Mother for whatever the Sitting Bull may do among you. Now let the man speak."

Riel listened to him quietly enough, and then began the harangue he had carefully studied to bring the Indians over to his side.

He told them that the Sitting Bull was the greatest warrior the red-men had had for many a long year; and that he had already crossed the border into the country of the White Mother, to which he came to get help from his red brothers.

That he would bring with him warriors, with whose aid they would be able to cast off the yoke of the White Mother and make to themselves their own country. He told them that all the Sitting Bull asked was that he be permitted to ally himself with them by marrying the daughter of Big Bear, so that he might become one of their nation and they one with him. He artfully insinuated that the white man who had come there was an enemy of theirs who had stolen into their camp to betray them to their foes, and that he was in league with the police.

Further, he insisted that they had come to a place where they had a chance to establish their own independence and make to themselves a nation, and that it was the duty of the Big Bear to give his daughter to the Sitting Bull and cement the alliance.

Then he paused and looked round, as one well satisfied with his own eloquence, and awaited the response of the chief.

He had spoken in the tongue of the Dakotas, and Herrendeen had understood what he meant; but the young man knew that he must not try to answer unless he was bidden, for it was evident that Riel was held in esteem by the Indians, while he himself was regarded as an interloper after the artful appeal of the half-breed.

Big Bear sat with his head bent on his breast when the other had finished, and did not give any answer till Poundmaker, with an air of some triumph, asked:

"What says the Big Bear? Will he give his daughter to the chief who has slain the best warrior of the white men of the South?"

Then the old chief raised his head proudly.

"The child is not mine to give," he said. "The blood of the White Mother runs in her veins, and I have sworn that she shall not be given in marriage, save with the consent of the White Mother herself."

He spoke so that Herrendeen understood him; and the young man was surprised at the effect his words produced on the Indians.

They all bowed their heads to the earth, and even the defiant air of the half-breed was clouded with an air of disappointment, as he answered:

"That is very well; but there is no man to hinder us if we make the step, and bring the Sitting Bull to our side. With him for an ally we can beat the White Mother's soldiers, and all the rest of them."

But at this even Poundmaker shook his head. He cast an apprehensive glance round at the circle as he said:

"The White Mother is our chief, to whom we have sworn obedience. She sends us our presents every year; and if she is angry with us she will send us no more presents."

This practical way of looking at the thing seemed to meet the approval of all there; for there was a grunt from the circle, and more than one muttered that "Poundmaker was right."

Herrendeen saw that the decision of the case was in doubt, and a sudden impulse made him ask White Falcon with his eyes (for he did not dare to speak), whether he might venture to say something.

The girl seemed to understand him at once, for she leaned over to her father and made him a silent signal, which the old man appeared to understand; for he turned round to Nevermiss and asked him:

"What says the stranger from the South? If the Sitting Bull takes my daughter, what will the men of the South say to it?"

Herrendeen felt his heart flutter at the question; but he spoke boldly:

"This man, who is a stranger to me, wishes you to give your daughter to the Sitting Bull, that he may help you fight. If he is such a great fighter, why does he not stay in the land of the South where his men are? I will tell you why. Because, if he stays there any longer, he will be taken captive or killed, and he flees to the land of the White Mother, to get away from his enemies."

This assertion seemed to strike the Indians as reasonable, for they all turned their eyes on Riel, who colored angrily, but made no reply, while Nevermiss continued:

"If he is such a great warrior, why does he not stay and fight the white men in his own country? This man says that he has crossed the border, and if he has, he has come here to try and get you to fight for him, and not because he can help you."

That also seemed to strike the Indians as being reasonable, and Nevermiss, seeing from the expression of their faces that they agreed with him, went on, pointing to White Falcon:

"Your chief's daughter was in peril from this man, and I saved her. Now he sends to ask her to do what she refused to do when she was in his camp and alone. If she would not do it then she is not likely to do it now. The chief has asked me what the white men of the South will say if he gives his daughter to the Sitting Bull. I will tell you. They will say that you did a foolish thing to give the child of a chief to a man who cannot take care of her as a chief's child should be taken care of."

Then he sat down again, and Louis Riel rose in his turn and said:

"My ears are full of the cackling of ducks on the water. The Sitting Bull is of our race, and he can help us. If he comes here to escape from his foes, he can stay here, where there are no foes to hurt him, till he has gathered in all his strength and can cross the border again, and drive the men of the South like hares before a wolf. As for this white hunter who is here, he is in the pay of the men of the South and a spy from the police. If we stay as we are, we all know what will become of us. Let us join the Sitting Bull and fight. The White Mother is far away over the sea, and cannot see us. She sends us presents, but what are they to what we can take for ourselves if we go on the war-path with Sitting Bull and all his warriors? We are warriors and can fight while our women and children are in safety here. If the red-men are men, they will take this hunter and kill him, for his tongue is full of lies, and he wishes to give us to our enemies."

He spoke with a great deal of gesticulation and fire, and had his effect on the Indians by appealing to their prejudices of race.

Herrendeen saw that he would have to do something to counteract the effect of the half-breed's eloquence, and a sudden thought came into his mind.

Without waiting for permission to speak, knowing that his life was not worth a moment's purchase if the Indians once got excited over him, he jumped up again and said boldly:

"The man who has spoken is a liar, and I will trust my cause to the judgment of the Great Spirit. Let the man and myself be put together on the grass, in front of this tent, and let us fight for the mastery. If I am a liar the Great Spirit will let him have the victory, but if he be the liar then the Great Spirit will take care of me."

The proposition was a novel one for the Indians to hear, but that it met their approval was plain, for Poundmaker said at once:

"Let the two men fight before us, and let the man that conquers the other be the friend of the tribes."

Herrendeen watched Riel, and saw an expression of exultation cross the dark face of the half-breed as he answered:

"Let it be so. We will take our rifles and be put opposite each other, to shoot. The man that kills his foe shall have his way."

White Falcon looked at her father as she noted the way in which the Indians took the offer, and spoke out herself:

"Let the men fight as they wish; but the White Falcon does not wed with the Sitting Bull till she pleases. If Riel beats the stranger the Sitting Bull may come in to be our friend; but he cannot have the White Falcon for his wife."

Riel heard her, and turned to his friends at once, demanding:

"And who is the White Falcon, that she is to stand in the way of the happiness of her people? The stranger has made the proposition, and he shall be held to it. If I kill him, the White Falcon must obey the voice of the Great Spirit as well as the rest of us."

And Herrendeen noted that the faces of the Indians round him attested that they thought with Riel, even that of Big Bear having a sad and resigned expression as he said:

"If the Great Spirit says it must be done, it shall be done. The White Mother is great; but the Great Spirit is greater. Let the men be put out on the grass, and try to kill each other; but

they must go as the Great Spirit meant them to go, and have no weapons but those he gave them to fight with."

There was another approving grunt from the Indians in the circle and they all rose and came to the scout, who began to see what he had unwittingly brought upon himself. When he had challenged the big half-breed to fight, he had thought only of the knife, or rifle, or pistols; but it seemed as if the Indians had settled in their own minds some other sort of duel, and he found what they meant when he saw Louis Riel stripping off his garments and weapons and throwing them down on the grass, while the Indians told him to do the same.

They were to fight with nature's weapons, and Riel was a giant in stature, with the body of a Hercules, while the young scout was both shorter and lighter in every way.

But as he was in for it, there was no help; and Nevermiss made the best of his bargain, and in a few minutes was stripped for the fight and eying his huge antagonist carefully.

Riel advanced toward him with a confident air, his arms extended to grasp the other, and evidently resolved to end the fight with a clutch in which he hoped that his strength was sufficient to crush in the other, or strangle him at once.

Nevermiss, on the other hand, had not lived on the frontier all his life without plenty of experience in rough-and-tumble fights, and he knew that, as a rule, white men were more than a match for Indians at all sports requiring strength and dexterity.

He backed away from his antagonist amid a deep silence till the big Canadian made a rush at him, when he ducked his head and came up inside the other's guard.

Then Nevermiss George dealt Riel a blow the half-breed had little expected (for Indians have no notion of fighting with the fist), which took the Hercules under the eye and sent him staggering back, and before he could recover, Herrendeen was on him, plying him with blow on blow, in a style that evidently astonished the Indians, who had never seen anything of the sort before, while the great Hercules whirled his arms round like a windmill, striking wild, but unable to get in a blow on his active antagonist.

But as the fight went on the great strength of the big half-breed gave him an advantage after all, and as he began to learn what blows of the fist meant he rushed in to close, and had almost reached Herrendeen when the blast of a bugle was heard.

CHAPTER X.

THE MOUNTED POLICE.

THE sound of the bugle produced a singular effect on the Indians in the circle, who had been contemplating the fight in stolid gravity.

They rushed in and parted the two men, hurrying them off in different directions as fast as they could; taking Herrendeen into the white guest-tent, just as the gallop of horses was heard, and Major Roberts rode up, with some ten or twelve men in scarlet, halting in front of the tepee, to demand sternly:

"What's the matter here? Where is the white man who came here this evening?"

Herrendeen, who was inside the tepee, heard him speak, but did not understand, the major using French; but he saw the figure of White Falcon on her bay pony by the officer, and knew that the girl must have gone for him.

It surprised the young man to see in what awe the Indians seemed to hold the few men who acted as police in their camp. There were hundreds of warriors all round, and only about a dozen of the soldiers; yet the Indians had crept into their tepees like schoolboys afraid of a master, while the major sat on his horse outside as if he had been a king in his court, who knew none would dare to disobey him.

"Where is the white man who came here?" the officer asked again.

Then, as no one answered, he called out:

"Where is the Poundmaker, and where is Big Bear?"

The Indians who had hurried Herrendeen into the tent had stood before him all this time, and now some of them silently handed him his clothing, which had been taken away, and made signs to him to dress quickly.

While he was doing this he heard the voice of Poundmaker talking to the officer, in what seemed to him an apologetic manner, while the growling tones of Big Bear were plainly audible in a similar strain.

As soon as he had dressed he went out to the front of the tepee, and showed himself to the officer, who, as soon as he saw him in the moonlight, said, with an air of relief:

"What have you been doing? I heard that you were in danger."

Herrendeen shook his head.

"I warn't in no danger, major. Had a little muss with a feller wanted to whip me; that was all. But I hain't b'en brought up in Dakota, not to know how to take keer of myself."

He noticed that the Indians were all watching him furtively, with their glowing eyes; and he remembered that he had been accused of being in secret league with the police.

Obviously there was something going on in this camp of which he was not fully informed. The Indians seemed to stand in awe of the police, and yet it was sufficient for a man to be deemed in league with those very police for him to excite their enmity.

For a moment he was tempted to go close to the major and have some confidential communication with him, and then he remembered that if he did so, from what he had seen, he would have to leave the protection of the Indians and join the police for good, which he did not want to do yet.

The major eyed him doubtfully, and asked:

"Who were you fighting with? We don't allow any fighting in this camp unless we take a hand in it ourselves."

Herrendeen laughed, for he saw that the Indians were watching him, and answered:

"That's for you to find out, major. I was always taught that, when a man has a fair fight with another man, it is a mean thing to tell on the other feller, especially if he got the worst of it. There ain't no harm done, as I know of."

The major bit his lip and looked round at the circle. White Falcon, now that she had done what she wished, had dismounted from her pony and vanished into some tent, near by; and the major, who knew how much of his influence with the Indians depended on moral influence, saw that he would have to wink at a disturbance that had ceased so entirely that he could not find out what it had all been about.

So he turned to Big Bear, and said impressively:

"Let there be no more fighting in this camp, chief; for the White Mother does not like her red children to fight. Can I depend on you to have no more of it, to-night?"

Big Bear promised faithfully that there should be no more that night, and the little squad of police rode off to their own camp, where they had a stockaded fort and were prepared to fight under the protection of a Gatling gun, while the Indians crowded around Herrendeen, and showed him that he had raised himself in their estimation by shielding them from the anger of the police.

Big Bear and Poundmaker both shook his hand as if he had been a brother, and when he went to his rest that night, in the big tepee, he could not but feel satisfaction when he reflected that he had got the best of the half-breed in the fight, as far as it had gone, and that the Indians seemed to think all the better of him for it.

As for Riel, he saw no more of him that night, and when the morning came the half-breed had left the camp, as he was informed by White Falcon, for his own village, disappointed that he had not been able to breed a disturbance between the police and the tribes.

"But how is it," asked Herrendeen, seeing that they were alone, and he could speak freely for the first time since he had been in the camp to the girl chief, "that your people seem to be in such awe of the police, and yet hate them so much?"

White Falcon smiled slightly, as she answered:

"They are like children, my people, and I am ashamed to say it. They are eager for presents, and they dread punishment from men who are not afraid to die, like the soldiers here. If they dared they would rise against them; but they do not dare, till they are ready to kill every man of the soldiers in this land. To be a friend of the police, with them, is to be an enemy of themselves in the case of a stranger; but when my father or myself asks help of the police, as I did last night, it is a different thing. But do not trouble yourself about that to-day. We are going to have the great hunt, and you are invited to ride with me. The police will not come near us while we are hunting, and you will see our men as they are. But you must keep near my father, or myself, or near Poundmaker, if you wish to be safe. Louis Riel is to be in camp, with some of his friends, and he has a spite against you, as you have already seen."

"But what have I ever done to him that he has such a spite?" asked George.

They were at the door of the great tepee as he asked the question, and the girl was standing beside him, while the rest of the Indians were engaged about various occupations in camp.

White Falcon looked round her before she answered, as if afraid of being overheard, and said, in a low tone:

"He is come from Sitting Bull, who wishes to marry me, and he thinks you are the man who is in the way."

George Herrendeen felt his face flushing as the girl spoke, and there was something in his rising color that seemed to make her blush by sympathy, as she added:

"But of course he is wrong, for in your land, I am told that white men who marry girls of the red race are looked upon as having degraded themselves."

Herrendeen felt a tremor go through all his frame as she spoke. What the girl had said was true, that a man who married an Indian woman was looked on, in the West, with much the same feelings that a man who should marry a negress would be looked on in the South.

The title, "squaw man," was one which he had always heard used as one of contempt and

hated, from most white men, toward those of their fellows who had been adopted into Indian tribes by marriage with some Indian girl.

Nevertheless, so great was the charm of the strange girl before him that all these prejudices were swept away like straws before a gale, as he said to her:

"No man could ever feel degraded for marrying you, White Falcon."

The girl faced round on him with a strange, penetrating glance, asking:

"And why not?"

Herrendeen was puzzled for a moment what to say. Brought up as he had been, in the midst of the bitter prejudices of the ignorant and ferocious frontiersmen who swarm on the plains, he yet could not answer this beautiful girl as an Indian.

So he stammered as he replied:

"Because you are a lady, you know. You're not like the rest of the squaws one sees. Any man in Dakota might be proud to marry a girl like you, White Falcon, and thank his stars for the luck that brought you to him."

The girl nodded her head as one who was well satisfied to hear him speak, and suddenly addressed him in much better English than he had ever heard her speak before, saying:

"Then, if it became a choice between marrying the Sitting Bull and yourself, and I were to say, before the tribe, that I preferred you, you would not refuse my hand before them all?"

Herrendeen colored deeply, as he answered:

"Refuse you? Why, White Falcon, if I thought you could be fond of me, I'd be that glad— But sho! 'tain't no use talkin' about that. You're a princess hyar, with all the ponies and robes a gal could want, and I'm only a pore feller that runs the perarer, as he's b'en used to sence he were a boy; and your father wouldn't have nothen' to say to me. I couldn't give him no thousand ponies for ye, White Falcon, and we both know it."

The girl smiled as she heard him speak, and turned round on him to answer:

"So you think, because I said that Sitting Bull could not have me, unless he was able to give a thousand ponies to my father, that such would be my answer to *any man* that might ask me to be his wife. But you forget one thing."

"And what is that?" he asked, seeing her hesitate.

She made no direct answer to his question, but turned the conversation by saying:

"If I told you a story of a man who married a princess in the old times, would it interest you, or would you not care to hear it?"

Herrendeen colored deeply.

"I'd allers be glad to hear anything you had to say to me, White Falcon. But I wish I could ax ye suthin' first."

"And what is that?" she asked.

"Why is it that you pretended ye couldn't talk English when we met in Dakota, and hyar ye are, talkin' it better than I do?"

The girl smiled in a mysterious, provoking way.

"You must not ask questions," she said, quietly. "I am not like the rest of the girls you have seen in Indian tepees. The White Mother does not treat her Indian children like the great father, of whom the Dakotas tell me. I was sent to school in Montreal, and there are men in this camp to-day that know more than you would believe possible, seeing them, as you do, among the customs of their fathers. But I promised to tell you a story. Once on a time there was a princess in a far country, for whom all the men of her own rank strove in vain. She was the daughter of a rich and great king, and all the princes thought that to marry her would be a good thing for them. But this princess had a great desire to be loved for herself, and had made a vow that she would never marry any man unless he loved her for herself alone. And the princes came and strove for her hand, but she set them all tasks that she knew they could not possibly accomplish, till she had driven them away, and the people said that she had made up her mind never to marry. At last she left her kingdom and went to a far country, in which she met a young prince who thought her only to be a shepherdess. And when she saw this young prince, she thought that he was only a simple hunter. And they met in the wilderness, where there were no kings and no princes; and they loved each other. But enemies came between them and separated them, so that the prince was fain to flee, and the princess to return to her own country. And after a time he searched for her all over the world till at last he came to her country. And when he found that she was a princess indeed, he began to be afraid that she never could love a man like him; for he was a prince without a kingdom, and poor in goods. But she, thinking that in all the world, there is nothing like true love to make a woman happy all her life, showed him by all the signs a woman can use, that she preferred him to any one else. And so—well, what do you think of the story now?"

As she spoke she turned away her head, and began to finger the lock of her rifle that she held in her hand, looking away from him.

Herrendeen was a scout who had learned the

plains since he had been a boy, thinking of nothing but the lore of the desert; and yet he felt that the girl meant him to understand something from the story.

In a tremulous tone he said:

"That's a good deal like my story and yours, White Falcon; but there's one fault about it."

"And what is that?" she asked.

"Why, you know, you're a princess, sure enough; but theron ain't no makin' a prince out of me, try the best ye kin," he said, slowly.

The girl flung back her long hair with a jerk, as if impatient at what he said, as she answered pettishly:

"You are stupid this morning. Look yonder. The men are gathering for the surround. Did you ever hear of the way in which the white hunter, who stole the Princess Bounding Fawn, cheated her father, who wanted a great price for her?"

The young scout shook his head.

"Never heard of him or her."

The girl gave a saucy smile as she retorted:

"You would never do as he did. He ran away with the princess, and kept her till her father was glad to get her back, at any price. Come, it is time we were getting to our horses."

As she spoke the Indians began to move out of the camp all around them.

CHAPTER XI. POUNDMAKER'S TRAP.

AN hour later the prairie was being swept by a line of Indians, more than four miles long, in the center of which the gigantic form of Big Bear, distinguished by his black plumes, rode, as the old chief directed the operations of the surround.

In front of the line, as it slowly advanced, the two ends curving in like the points of a crescent, a mob of wild animals, of all descriptions, was fleeing in dismay, straight toward the dark line in the prairie, which Nevermiss had noticed when he first caught sight of the camp, in coming from Batouche.

The line ahead was a fence, strong enough to hold the rush of a herd of buffalo, and the line had been constructed in the form of a V, so that any animals that once began to follow it toward the center would find themselves in a corner.

Still further to lead them on, an opening had been made at the point of the V, which led into a huge corral, more than a mile square, capable of holding all the game that could be driven into it by the line of hunters.

In the middle of the line, but retired behind the chiefs, Big Bear and Poundmaker, rode the white scout from the South, whose presence had roused so much curiosity in the camp.

As White Falcon had advised him, he kept close to her; but he watched the rest of the field, and especially looked for the big half-breed, with whom he had had so much trouble the night before.

He had not long to look before he saw Riel on a stout pony, fully armed, riding at one end of the line, but gradually drawing near to him, as the scout saw.

Nevernuss, as the line advanced, noticed that the excitement increased, for the number of animals was growing every moment, and as this took place the animals themselves became more and more alarmed at the vicinity of the fence, and made frequent efforts to rush along the front, and get out by the flanks of the line. Then the pace of the drivers increased, till men who had been riding at a walk began to trot and gallop, and finally the whole line was at full speed, rushing forward at each end to get all the beasts penned in between the hunters and the fence, so as to get every head into the fatal "pound" which had been constructed.

As this hurry increased so did the excitement of the young scout, who could not help being caught by the contagion of the yelling and galloping; and thus it happened that he had forgotten all about the vicinity of Louis Riel till he found himself close to that personage, in one of the last rushes, and almost ran against his pony in a charge.

Instinctively he brought forward his rifle, with an idea that the half-breed might mean mischief; but as he looked at Riel he saw that the other was apparently completely absorbed in the chase, and looking another way.

Nevermiss got an opportunity to get a square look at his face, and saw that it was all swollen and bruised, from the contest of the previous night, both eyes being puffed, one of them almost closed, while his dark complexion made the discoloration none less plainer than the same would have been on the face of a white man.

As they rode along, nearly side by side, Riel turned one glance at him, which was almost instantly averted; but the sullen ferocity of that glance told George that he was right, and that the half-breed had been made into his bitter foe by the occurrence of the previous night, while the punishment had not been sufficient to scare him.

Just as he made this discovery came a great yelling from the front, as a herd of buffalo, numbering some fifty or sixty head, made a charge to get through the hunters, and the rifles

began to crack, to turn them or drop those who would not be turned.

Then Herrendeen noticed that the half-breed had taken his rifle in his hand, and was riding glancing round on every side, as if watching for something. That sight made him look round himself, and he saw that, in the excitement of the chase, he had gone from anywhere near Big Bear and Poundmaker, and that he was alone in the midst of Indians and half-breeds.

In another moment the buffalo came charging in, and a volley of rifle-shots was poured into them.

Men were firing rapidly with rifle and pistol at the black brutes, as they came thundering on; but Herrendeen had indulged in too many such hunts to get excited, and something told him to reserve his fire, for it might be wanted to save his own life.

In another moment he saw Riel fire his rifle at an old bull, who came along as if he was determined to get through, and the animal dropped with a suddenness that showed the half-breed to be a good shot, for his aim had been taken almost instantaneously.

Then came a rush of all the hunters at what was left of the herd, and the charge was checked; the remainder of the beasts turned, and, in a few minutes more the whole mob of animals had taken their cue to enter the pound, and went streaming in, bellowing in all kinds of tones, till the last had disappeared within the opening, which was at once closed by the hunters.

This was the moment of the greatest confusion of all, and Herrendeen had forgotten himself in the excitement, and was galloping round with the rest to close the last avenue, when the hiss of a bullet close to his cheek, was followed by a hole in the rim of his broad, gray hat; and as he turned his head, he saw the smoke curling from the muzzle of Riel's rifle, as that person, not fifty yards off, was looking straight at him, in the midst of a group of his friends.

For a moment the scout was tempted to send a shot from his own rifle at the cowardly murderer, who had attempted to kill him in such a dastardly way; and then noticed that at least a dozen of the half-breeds were beside their leader, eying him sternly, and fingering the locks of their rifles, while Riel himself, with a grin on his face, was coolly blowing the smoke from his piece and preparing to reload it.

The scout cast a hasty glance round the field, and saw in the distance the black plume of Big Bear, with the tall figure of Poundmaker not far off, while the white dress of the girl about whom he had been thinking all that morning was nowhere to be seen.

Wheeling suddenly, he set spurs to his horse and tore away at full speed to join the men, with whom, as White Falcon had told him, he could only find safety.

He expected to hear the whistle of another bullet, if not to feel one, before he got there, but the half-breeds seemed to be satisfied by having driven him off, and he reached the side of the chiefs without getting hit.

Here he rode up to Big Bear, and told him in a low voice that Riel had just fired at him, asking what he should do about it, as he did not want to make trouble in the camp.

The chief appeared to be greatly surprised at the story, and said something to a young warrior beside him, whom he dispatched after Riel, and, as soon as he had gone, told Nevermiss to keep close to him, for the rest of the day.

"For none will dare to harm the friend of Big Bear when I can see them," he said; "though they are angry with you in Batouche because you have come to persuade us to keep away from the Sitting Bull."

Nevermiss was glad to obey the injunction to keep close to his host, for, brave as he was, he had a sort of uneasy feeling that he was one man in the midst of a host of enemies, in a position where he did not dare to defend himself, unless he had the permission of his few friends, for fear every man in the camp would turn on him and tear him to pieces.

He looked round for White Falcon, but she was nowhere to be seen, and he began to feel very lonesome, when he heard a disturbance behind the line of hunters, with shrill yells, and the whole party set off at speed, scattering wildly, and showing, as they went, that another party of Indians was coming toward them from the direction of Batouche.

Nevermiss could not at first see who these strange Indians were, but as they drew closer he recognized the peculiar way in which the Sioux wear their blankets, and realized that the newcomers were in all probability a party from the Sioux who had just crossed the border, and perhaps had with them Sitting Bull himself.

As he thought of this, and looked round him, he saw that his own position grew perilous, and with that idea he gradually withdrew from the vicinity of the Indians and held aloof from the new-comers till he could decide on what he should do.

The half-breeds, he saw, had gone off with the rest, and he was unnoticed.

The best course appeared to him to be to make his way to the camp of the police and keep under their protection, and with that idea in his

head, he set off at a canter in the direction in which the dark outline of the block-house in which they had their quarters rose on the green plain.

But he had not gone far in that direction when he caught sight of a well-known figure in white raiment that started from behind the shelter of one of the wood islands that studded the prairie in that direction.

There was no mistaking the slender and rounded outline, the bay pony, and air of the whole person. It was White Falcon, and she saw him; for as soon as she appeared she made a sort of signal with her hand and rode off.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RUNAWAY PRINCESS.

The young scout felt his heart beating wildly, he hardly knew why, as he set spurs to his horse and galloped off after the mysterious girl who had spoken to him in such a singular way that morning.

White Falcon had beckoned him to follow her, and the way in which she was going was straight out to the north, into the trackless wilderness of which he had heard, which stretched all the way to the Great Slave Lake, the Coppermine river and its frozen plains.

He had nothing to do but obey the call, and as he rode he cast no glance behind him.

He knew that his enemies had got into the camp and that, had he remained there, he would have found it impossible to stem the current of public opinion which made the alliance with the Sioux for a time a thing that had to be accomplished, whatever might be the ultimate result. Ten minutes after he had ridden from the camp he was behind a fringe of timber, following the white figure which flitted ever before him as the girl led him on from timber to timber over the same unvarying plain, seeming quite secure of her direction wherever she went till, after a ride of nearly two hours, she allowed him to come up with her, and said to him, with a smile that puzzled him as to its meaning:

"The bridegroom has come; but where is the bride?"

Not understanding what she meant, he asked: "Who is the bridegroom?"

White Falcon laughed.

"The warrior they call the Sitting Bull. Did you not see him coming into the camp with his braves?"

"And was that the Sitting Bull?" he asked in surprise, for he had never seen the celebrated chief of the confederation, and had a great curiosity to do so.

"He came with the rest. I know them all, and saw them while the rest of the men were full of their hunt. Rain-in-the-Face was the first man to come into camp, and when I saw him I knew that his chief could not be far off."

"And where are we to go now?" he asked, bewildered at the news.

White Falcon laughed as she answered:

"It depends on what sort of a man is this Sitting Bull, and what sort of a man are you."

More puzzled than before, the young scout said:

"I hardly understand you, White Falcon."

The girl flashed a glance at him that surprised him, so full was it of scorn and anger, as she said:

"It depends on whether you are a fool or not. The Sitting Bull has come here to make an alliance with my father and Poundmaker, and to cement it by marrying me. There are only two ways in which I can escape the marriage which I hate. One is to kill the Sitting Bull or myself; the other—"

She did not finish the sentence, but flashed on him another of those singular, scornful looks, at which he cried out:

"White Falcon, that is but one way. If you was only my wife, I'd defy all the Sioux on the plains to tar yo from me. Is that what ye mean?"

The girl made no answer, but there was a smile on her face that showed she understood him, and he added earnestly:

"Ef I only thought ye'd have me, when you're a well edicated gal, as the major says, and I'm only a pore hunter that runs the perarer, I'd be the happiest man on 'arth. But ef ye was to say yes, how should I be able to git ye away from hyar, with ail the tribes arter us?"

White Falcon smiled again.

"That would be nothing," she said, "if I wished to say yes. We are now on the straight road to the Lost Mountains, where no Cree would dare follow us. They will be full of their feasts, and will not miss us for some time yet. When they do, it will be too late. They cannot pick our trail from the rest in the confusion of the hunt, unless they make a large circuit, and by the time they lift it we shall be in the Lost Mountains, and in the place where we shall be safe from them all."

The young hunter drew a little closer to her, and looked into her eyes, as he whispered:

"White Falcon, will you go with me, really?"

She nodded brightly, and turned her horse. Pointing to the north, she said, indicating a low mound which looked like a mole-hill on the distant horizon:

"That is the Lost Mountain. It looks from

here as if it were a little hill, but it is a high mountain, though a long way off. When we get there we are safe. Till we do I am liable to be followed and taken back."

She said the last words with a slight shudder, as if the idea was a horrible one, and Herrendeen earnestly exclaimed:

"That shall never be while I've got a shot left in the pouch."

The girl seemed to be satisfied with what he said, for she continued her rapid ride and let him come close by her side, as they galloped along, with an air of confidence that did not escape him.

White Falcon did not seem to be in the least alarmed at being alone with him in the trackless desert, but to have perfect confidence in his honor, and thus they rode on for hour after hour till the sun had passed the zenith and was sloping toward the west, while the little mound on the horizon seemed just as far off as ever.

Not till the sun was within an hour of setting, and after their horses were pretty nearly fagged out, in spite of their hardy nature, did Nevermiss begin to see the explanation of the apparent mystery.

Then they drew rein at a slope, which descended, before their eyes, toward another plain, lower than the one on which they had been riding, and saw that what had looked like a little knoll was really only the top of a lofty mountain, part of a lower range, which rose from this plain, so far away that Herrendeen thought that it would take them another good day, if not more, to reach the foot thereof.

This plain almost exactly resembled the one on which they had been riding, but Nevermiss could see, from the summit on which he stood, that it had a gentle but decided slope to the north, and realized that he had arrived at the summit of the great divide, at the other side of which all the rivers flow into the Arctic Ocean.

Yet the climate did not seem to be any colder, and the trees that grew in islands, here and there on the prairie, seemed to be, if anything, of loftier stature and greater girth than those he had passed thus far.

White Falcon noticed his glance of admiration at the beautiful prospect before them, and in a voice that showed pride, said:

"All this belongs to us and the White Mother, and no man from the south but yourself had ever seen it, till to-day. Once we reach the Lost Mountain we are safe from Sitting Bull and all his people, even if Poundmaker takes up his cause, and tries to hunt me down."

"In the mean time," remarked the scout, "we have plenty of places to go into camp yonder. That's all the water one kin ax fur, White Falcon. What's that river thar?"

"That is the Lost Mountain river, and on the other side there is a lake in the center of which is an island, where we are going," she said, with a smile. "Did you ever hear of the Jesuit Fathers?"

Herrendeen seemed to be considering.

"I've h'ard the name, White Falcon, but I don't rightly know whar."

"They have a mission on the lake in the island," she said, "and when we reach them there is none can harm us. But till we do that we are in danger. They are on our track now, I think."

She turned round and peered earnestly over the green prairie.

Nothing was to be seen there, on account of the flatness of everything, but the girl seemed to have some instinct which told her that they were being followed, and she turned her pony down the slope and never drew rein till they had reached the river of which he had spoken.

It seemed to take its rise in some little springs in more than one direction, for there was a maze of little streams, which crossed them at every few steps, before they reached a place where it became worthy of the name of a river. Then they saw a sheet of water before them at least a hundred feet broad, and White Falcon said to him:

"We have gone as far as we can on the land. We shall have to take the dug-out here."

She led the way along the bank of the stream, seeming to know every step of the way, till the trees that grew along the bank became thicker than usual and their trunks were incumbered with underbrush.

On one of the trees Herrendeen saw, high up from the ground, a mark that looked as if it had been blazed with a hatchet, in the form of a cross, and White Falcon pointed to it, saying:

"The fathers put it there, and we are safe."

She rode boldly into the underbrush till she paused at the foot of the marked tree.

It overhung the water, and at the foot, fastened to a root that stretched out into the current, lay a big flatboat dug out of a single trunk, with a wild vine for a cable and two rude paddles lying inside.

Herrendeen got off his horse and stepped into the dug-out, which he found dry and ready for use. He saw that it was large enough to hold the horses as well as themselves, and he got it close to the bank and led in both horses. Then he and the girl stepped in, and the rope of vine was cast off.

A few minutes later they were floating down the current of the lonely river, which seemed to be entirely deserted by the human race; while the water-fowl that rose from the surface, as they rounded winding after winding, only fluttered a few feet and settled down to stare after the strange craft, as if they were too much accustomed to be let alone to feel the slightest alarm at the presence of man.

Then as the river increased in breadth, and they floated on, White Falcon pointed back to the long slope they had just left.

"I told you they were after us," she cried. "We got the dug-out just in time."

Herrendeen, following the direction of her eye and finger, saw in the distance the forms of such a number of horsemen that he realized that he was being followed by at least a hundred men, who were all riding hard, from the way in which the dark dots he saw were moving over the landscape.

A little anxious about the future, he asked the girl by his side:

"Are there any more boats on this river that they can take?"

She bowed her head.

"There is another, about three miles below, and if they have seen us they will make for that, in the hope of getting there before we do. But if we get there before they do, we can set it adrift, and laugh at them."

She seemed quite calm over the prospect, as if she felt confident of doing it; and Herrendeen seized one of the paddles that lay in the bottom of the dug-out and began to work his best to urge the clumsy craft along.

White Falcon did not follow his example till she had watched the distant horsemen keenly for nearly a minute.

Then she came to his side, took the other paddle, and said quietly:

"They have seen us, and are trying to get to the boat before we do. We must work hard, or we shall have to fight for our liberty."

So saying, she took the other paddle, and the boat began to glide down the river with considerable speed, passing thicket after thicket, in the midst of a dead silence, till they had gone nearly the distance she had indicated, when the sound of a distant yell burst on their ears, and Nevermiss, looking down an opening in the foliage that bordered the river, saw a troop of horsemen coming on at full speed.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HIDDEN LAKE.

The sight of the horsemen coming had an effect on the young scout which made him work harder than ever, and as the boat glided on, the foliage closed in on his pursuers and he lost sight of them again.

It was nervous work passing along the edge of the next thicket, for neither fugitive could tell but what the foe might be behind the screen.

But in a little more they came to another opening, and saw their enemies still at a distance that precluded firing, while White Falcon exclaimed triumphantly:

"Yonder lies the dug-out. We shall get there before they do. In to the bank!"

Standing as they were, looking toward the bow of the little vessel, they could see where they were going, and Nevermiss George caught sight of a big flat-boat lying by the side of a tree, in plain sight from shore and river.

"That is the fathers' ferry-boat for travelers," White Falcon explained as he saw it. "They are men of peace, who harm no one in the wilderness; and they will forgive us if we take it from the men who are trying to follow me. I will jump in as we pass and cut it adrift while you cover me with your rifle. They are getting near."

In fact, at that moment the yell that came sounding down the avenue of the forest that encircled the banks of the stream, warned them that there was no time to lose, and Herrendeen, with a few vigorous strokes, brought the dug-out close to the strange boat, and saw White Falcon leap in and draw her knife, cutting at the rope that tied it to the root of the tree.

He threw down his paddle, letting his own boat drift, and took his rifle.

The Indians were coming down the avenue of the forest as hard as they could drive their ponies with the whip, and at the head of all he saw the burly figure of the big half-breed Riel.

Leveling the piece over the side of the dug-out, he fired, and had the satisfaction of seeing the half-breed's pony roll headlong, while the rider was thrown on his head by the sudden fall at full speed, and the rest who were coming after him were huddled in a heap.

At the same moment the flat-boat parted from the shore, and the two boats went floating down the stream, side by side, while White Falcon waved her hands and sent forth a whoop of triumph, that evidently maddened the pursuers; for it was answered by a perfect volley of bullets, that went skipping over the water round both boats, as they floated past into the shelter of the next thicket.

For a moment Nevermiss thought his com-

panion had been hurt, but he was reassured when she said to him scornfully:

"And Riel thinks he can shoot, he and his friends. They must take lessons from the Far Fighter, if they want to hurt us. Here is the take at last."

As she spoke, Nevermiss heard the roaring of water behind him, and the boats increased their speed perceptibly. In a few moments more both boats shot over a low cascade, and floated in a clear lake, that was bordered on one side by a precipice at least a hundred feet high; seeing which, the scout realized that they had reached, without seeing it, the foot of the "Lost Mountain," of which his companion had spoken when they first set out on their flight.

He had not noticed it on account of the trees that lined the bank, which cut off the view, and from having been engaged in watching his pursuers; but now that he was under its shadow, it looked, as White Falcon had told him when they first spied it, to be a high and precipitous mountain.

The river that ran by it washed the foot of its extreme southern spur, and the mountain itself seemed to rise out of a basin, much lower than the rest of the plain that surrounded it, on account of the fall which had swept the boats into the quiet waters of the lake, and the fact that a current which seemed to be running at the rate of two or three miles an hour, was yet bearing them on, under the precipice, toward a jutting rock that shot out from the face of the wall, some hundred feet further on.

For a few moments it seemed to him as if the two boats would be dashed against this spur of the precipice; but as they neared it he saw that quite a wave was running by it, swelling up, like the rapids at Niagara, and he had cause to congratulate himself that it was there; for, just before he reached it, came the crackling of rifles from the place where they had left their foes, and the snapping of bullets told that something was struck in the boats.

Nevermiss started round in alarm to see if his companion had been hit; but she had disappeared from sight, and the boat in which she had jumped to leave the shore was floating along as if empty.

In another moment the current swept him round the projecting rock. As it did so, the last bullet sent from his enemies passed through his broad gray hat, and knocked it from his head.

In another moment he was out of sight of his foes, and as the flat-boat in which White Falcon had taken passage floated into the same security the girl herself raised her head over the gunwale, from where she had been lying, and said to him, with the same defiant smile she had shown when they had missed her before:

"And Louis Riel and his friends think they can shoot. Not one of them knew the place to aim."

Then she added, as she rose to her feet:

"They have managed to put some holes in the boat, though, and I fear the fathers will scold when they find they have to mend it. Come near, and take me on board, for the water is coming in, and we must take the boat to the fathers."

He swept his own boat nearer to the big flat in which she had taken her passage, which he saw to be already a quarter full of water, coming in from several holes where the bullets had entered.

As White Falcon stepped on board the dug-out he noticed that, though she had made so light of the fire of her late foes, her white hunting-shirt had been torn in more than one place, and that she had had a narrow escape from being hit.

But she seemed as much accustomed to danger as himself, and to heed it as lightly; for she only laughed at his serious face, and took up a paddle as if nothing had occurred.

Then the two boats swept on, the dug-out towing the flat-boat by the painter, though their progress was slow and tiresome, for the larger boat filled even after the weight of the girl had left it, till it rested with the edge of the gunwale just above the water.

But the novelty of the scenery was enough to keep Herrendeen from being tired of the voyage he had entered on.

The further they advanced the more romantic and singular became their surroundings, till it seemed to the young man as if he had entered another world.

The shape of the lake was that of a long and rather narrow sheet of water, dominated over on one side by a towering mountain, which came down, in its last hundred feet or so, into a precipice nearly as steep as a wall.

On the other side the shores were low and swampy, as he could see from the tall grass that fringed the water and extended into the lake itself, while his late foes were riding a long way off, as if trying to skirt the water, but unable to approach the shores on account of the swamp.

As far as he could judge, the length of the lake seemed to be about five or six miles; the breadth another mile or two in the broadest part; but the swamp beyond, on one side, and the precipice on the other, prevented any one from coming near it, save by the way they had come, floating down the river.

As he cast his eyes over the lake he perceived,

nestling under the shelter of the precipice and rising out of what was evidently very deep water, an island crowned with trees, and what looked to him very like a garden, in the midst of which were the gray walls of some building.

White Falcon pointed this building out to him, and said with a tone of satisfaction:

"The convent at last. Let the Sitting Bull and Riel rave all they wish now; we are safe."

Then they continued on their way slowly, and as they went he asked her:

"How did they come to be here, the fathers of whom you speak, and what is this convent?"

"They are all priests," she told him, "who have come out into the wilderness to save souls. In that convent there are men from all countries—men of wealth and education, who have given up all the luxuries of civilization, and have come here to live among the men you call savages, and convert them to the faith of the true church. The British Government knows nothing of them, and only the Indians and themselves know anything of the Lost Mountain and the convent in which they live. They have built it, as you see, in a place where they may be perfectly safe from attack from foes or wild beasts, for this lake does not freeze, even in the winter, and no one can come there, unless they take the boats that the fathers have left for the accommodation of pilgrims. Only my people know of this place, save the priests that are sent there from Europe; and it is said that they never know where they are going till they get to the convent, so carefully guarded is the secret."

The scout looked at the gray walls that rose above the foliage with wonder. It did not seem to him possible that there could be hidden, even in the wilderness of the Northwest, a place so utterly unknown as this.

It seemed to be the abode of a high degree of civilization, too, from the way in which the walls, as they drew nearer, revealed traces of careful workmanship.

He could see in the last rays of the sun, which had just set, leaving a red glow behind it, the gleaming of glass in windows; and they seemed to be of large size, with arched tops, such as he had never seen in his life, for he was a man who had never visited large cities and knew nothing of churches in Gothic.

The island on which this gray structure was built contained not more than forty or fifty acres; but it was covered everywhere with the marks of careful cultivation, and as they drew nearer they saw stone steps and a landing, at which the figures of men in dark robes could be seen, watching, as they approached.

The scout hardly knew what to make of it; but his companion seemed to be entirely at home, for she stood up as they drew near the landing-place, and waved her hand in salutation to the men in dark robes, as if she knew them; and he saw one of them return the salute with a gesture in which he extended his hand, as if in blessing.

Then the dug-out came up to the steps, and he saw that the men were all priests, or in priestly garments, with broad shovel hats on their heads, such as he had never seen in the West whence he came, while their faces were clean-shaven and expressive of quiet, peaceful lives, and kindness of disposition.

One of them, who seemed to be of inferior rank to the rest (for, instead of a long robe, he wore a short frock of black), came down the steps and took the painter of the boat, while a grave man at the top of the steps said:

"You can land, my children, but you must give up your weapons. This is a place where the arms of the flesh are not permitted."

"We are ready to obey the rules, father," said White Falcon—for Herrendeen was too much astonished to make any reply. "This is a brave hunter, who has saved me from the power of our enemies; and we have fled to the Convent of the Lost Mountain for refuge."

"The Convent of the Lost Mountain is the refuge of all who are oppressed," said the grave man; "but this young man hath the appearance of one who is not of our land, but from the South. Have you thought of the danger of letting him into the secret of the convent, my daughter?"

"I have; and there was no other way," she replied, rather impatiently. "I will tell you all when we are rested and fed, father. At present we are hungry and tired, for we have ridden from Batouche since the morning, and have eaten nothing."

The grave man, who was the Superior of the convent, bowed his head.

"You shall be rested and fed. Let the stranger give up his arms."

Thus adjured, Nevermiss, who had listened to the conversation like a man in a dream, stepped out of the boat to the steps, where the lay brother was waiting for him.

As the man held out his hand for the rifle which Nevermiss held, the scout shook his head, saying:

"No, no, sir; I ain't used to partin' with my weepins till I know whar I am. How am I to know that the Injuns that fellered us all day can't git hyar; and whar would I be without my rifle if it come to a muss? You fellers don't seem to have much to fight with."

White Falcon came to his side and said in a low tone, as if expostulating:

"Nevermiss, it is my wish. The fathers have lived here for years, and no Indian dare come near this island. It is the rule, and Father Innocent will be angry if you do not follow it."

The scout was disposed for a moment to hesitate about obeying even this; but after a short struggle he said:

"Well, if you say so, White Falcon, hyar it be, but tell the feller in black not to put it in a damp place, fur a rifle is like a gal: the least thing spiles it."

She took the rifle and handed it to the man in black.

Then Herrendeen gave up his pistols and knife, and the belt and pouch wherein he kept his ammunition, after which Father Innocent, as the Superior was called, said with a smile that showed he approved of the young stranger:

"You have done well, my son, and I am glad to see that you have obeyed the rules. As for the enemy that has followed you, you are as safe in this island as if in a city."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CONVENT OF LOST MOUNTAIN.

In those high latitudes, in summer, the twilight is apt to be very long, and the whole of the lake presented the appearance of a sheet of glass, so smooth was it, with the red glow of the evening sky reflected, as from a mirror.

Even the scout, who was not given to analyzing his feelings, could not help saying as he turned to follow Father Innocent:

"Mighty pretty place you've got, sir."

The Superior smiled as he replied:

"All places are beautiful, my son, if you look at them rightly. This is beautiful, because the good God's works have not been tampered with by men who do not obey him. When they come in, with their railways and steamers, the beauty will be marred, and the devil will enter. Let us go to the refectory."

Herrendeen had not the least idea what a refectory was; but he followed his conductor through a garden, laid out with all sorts of fruit trees and flowers, such as he had never seen before, till they arrived at the doorway of the gray building he had seen from the lake.

It was the first time he had seen such a fine specimen of architecture, and excited his wonder and admiration, as did everything he saw.

The main doorway was lofty and arched into a point, with huge doors of heavy wood, carved in panels, with all sorts of sculpture, such as he had never dreamed of in his innocence of such things. He had no idea that it was a Gothic doorway, or that the statues he saw there, of carved wood, were copied from a famous cathedral door in Europe; but he did notice that the whole building looked as if it had been made to sustain a siege, if need be, and that all the windows were high from the ground, while a deep and broad moat ran round the building, which he entered over a draw-bridge. The fathers of the Lost Mountain evidently did not propose to trust altogether to the arm of the spirit, in their dealings with their savage converts, if the latter took a fancy to attack them.

Inside the building he found a flood of colored light, coming in from stained-glass windows, while statues and pictures adorned the walls and reminded him of a church he had once seen in St. Paul, Minnesota, the only city of size he had ever visited.

But the sight of the refectory or dining-hall drove all these thoughts from his mind.

He remembered that he was, as White Falcon had said, very hungry, though he had not thought of it till he saw the table.

The girl-chief had entered with him, and they were marshaled to a place at a long table at which a number of men, who came in silently and with downcast eyes, took their seats.

Herrendeen, being hungry, wished to begin at once, but the dead silence which prevailed made him stop; and he saw that all the men at the table were waiting with their eyes cast down for a signal from the Superior, which came in the shape of a long Latin grace.

Then they began to eat, and the scout found that the food of the inmates of the convent was abundant and well-cooked, so that he made an excellent supper.

The tables were served by the men he had noticed, who wore short frocks instead of the long, black robes that were the dress of the Superior and the brothers of the order.

The meal over, the Superior gave another Latin blessing, and then said to Herrendeen:

"Come with me, my son, and we will talk a while."

Herrendeen followed him, but noticed that White Falcon, who had hitherto been close to him, now retired by herself, as if she knew the way in another direction.

The old priest led the way up a flight of winding stone steps till they emerged on the roof of the convent, which the scout found to be flat and surrounded with low battlements of stone.

From this elevated perch he had a full view of the whole lake and the opposite shore. He saw that the mountains lowered over the convent and that access thereto was absolutely im-

possible from that side, unless one could fly from the summit of the precipice.

On the other side, however, where the shores were low, he perceived, as soon as he got on the roof, that quite a number of Indians had gone into camp at the edge of the swamp that lined that quarter of the lake, and that they had built camp-fires, as if they intended to stay there for the night.

Father Innocent looked in that direction and seemed to be struck by the fact, for he said:

"Your enemies are not satisfied to have you here, my son. This is the first time I have seen them dare to go into camp in that quarter, and if I am not mistaken they are building a raft to come over here. Look down by the water at the edge."

Nevermiss looked and saw that the priest spoke truly. The Indians over in that quarter were actually felling trees, for he saw one fall while he was looking, and quite a quantity of the trunks were lying in the water at a place where the swamp receded from the edge, and left a little bay.

The raft they had made was covered with figures, and the men were working busily.

Father Innocent seemed uneasy, for he asked:

"Tell me, my son, what have you done to incur the enmity of these men? They do not seem to be any of my flock, for they have too many horses."

Herrendeen told him the story of the way in which he had come to the camp of the Cree chief, and how the Sioux had come after him, chasing him to the shores of the lake.

Then he added:

"Ye needn't be skeered about all their rafts, sir; for jest you give me my rifle, and let me sit hyar on this roof as they come on, and ef they ever git that raft nigh this wall it'll be because the ammunition gives out."

But Father Innocent shook his head.

"You do not know of what you speak, my son. We did not come here to kill men; but to make them alive again. I can understand why they followed you, but I do not understand yet why it is that White Falcon has come with you."

Herrendeen colored as he replied:

"That ain't for me to say, sir. I know the lady didn't want to stay home, 'cause they wanted to git her married to a man of the name of Sittin' Bull, and she don't like him."

"But who is this Sitting Bull, of whom you speak?" asked the Jesuit, calmly. "I have never heard his name before. Is he a Cree?"

"No; he's a Uncpapa Sioux," was the reply. "I ain't denying that he's a darned good man to fight; but the lady don't want nothen to do with him, and that's the hull matter."

"And she fled with you to escape being married to him," said the priest, thoughtfully. "My son, this is a matter that will make trouble. What said her father, the Big Bear?"

Herrendeen scratched his head.

"As fur as I remember he didn't seem to know exactly what to say, sir. One time I thought he said he didn't want her to marry the Sitting Bull, and the next he was willin' to give in to the rest, especially that half-breed cuss they call Riel."

The Jesuit started slightly and looked earnestly across the lake, where the men were working on the raft as hard as ever.

"Do you mean Louis Riel?" he asked.

"I don't know, sir, what his full name is; but he's a big stout feller, with a face something between an Injun and a white man, and he talks French."

"The same," said the priest, gravely. "He is a dangerous man, my son; and if he is your foe it will go far to assure you my protection."

Then he added, looking over at the men working on the raft:

"If the arm of the church must be invoked to punish, and the man you speak of is among the number, it may be that the Government will be thankful to us for doing the work they have not dared to do."

Then he added abruptly:

"What do you know of White Falcon, as you call her? Do you know who she is?"

The scout shook his head.

"Nothing but what she told me, sir; that she is the darter of Big B'ar, and suthin' else about the White Mother, that I didn't understand."

The priest eyed him sharply.

"You are sure that you did not understand?"

Herrendeen looked puzzled.

"How should a man that's b'en brought up on the prairie understand what a lady tells him that's b'en to school and talks all sorts of tongues? No, sir, I didn't understand what she meant."

The priest appeared to be satisfied, for he said no more on the subject, though Herrendeen thought that he was about to explain the thing which had excited his curiosity so strongly; but Father Innocent did not seem willing to say any more at the time, and just then they saw the raft, that had been constructed on the other side of the lake, begin to move out from the shore as if propelled by rowers.

It was crowded with people, as they could see; and the Superior, as he saw it coming, said with a decided air:

"Those men mean to come here against our

will. Let us go down, my son, and have the convent shut up, that they may see how useless are their efforts."

So saying, he went to the door by which they had ascended to the roof, and down the stairs to a place where hung a large bell. This he rung with a loud clang, and the whole convent, that had been so silent a moment before became alive in a very short time.

CHAPTER XV.

A SUMMONS TO SURRENDER.

THE scout, who had imagined that the priests had nothing to do but say their prayers, was surprised to see them come flocking up the stairs to the roof of the convent, their long black robes replaced by close-fitting garments of the same somber hue, while every man had a weapon of some sort, and the lay brother who had taken his gun came to him with it, and handed him all his weapons, at the order of the Superior.

The moon had just risen as the defenders of the convent came out on the flat roof, and White Falcon made her appearance with the rest, fully armed. Father Innocent, who had looked his name before, had donned belt and sword, with a gun in his hand, and as he came to the side of the battlement to look over, the raft had arrived under the walls at a distance which permitted speech, and showed the outlines of the men that loaded it.

The towering form of the half-breed chief was in the midst of the raft, and the scout saw that his followers were mostly half-breeds like himself, or Sioux Indians.

Father Innocent looked round, and said in a low voice to his men:

"Let all keep silence, and I will speak to these insolents."

Then he exerted his voice, which was high-pitched and piercing in quality, and called out:

"Who are these men that dare to come under the shadow of our convent without our permission?"

The harsh tones of Riel shouted back, in the French language, in which the priest had spoken:

"We have come to demand the stranger from the South, who has stolen the White Falcon from her father. Give him up to us, and let her return to her people."

The priest was about to answer, when White Falcon herself glided to his side and whispered something to him.

He seemed to be listening, and when she had finished he called back:

"The White Falcon is under my protection, and the man who wishes to take her back must brave the wrath of the church. She is not amenable to the laws of the red-men, for the blood of the great White Mother flows in her veins. Go back and trust to us to do justice, Louis Riel, for we have no part with you or your vile designs."

Herrendeen, not understanding what was said, yet saw that the answer seemed to create a division among the men on the raft, for a great jabbering arose, though the half-breed chief seemed to be exerting his authority to compel obedience to his orders.

He made no reply to what the priest had said, but seemed to be trying to induce his friends to make the raft advance; while they, on their part, seemed to be unwilling so to do.

The priest watched them, and at last cried out:

"I warn you to go back whence you came, for the White Falcon is under the protection of the church."

Then came a sudden disturbance on the raft, and Herrendeen saw the half-breed chief raise his rifle, while he shouted in French:

"That for the protection of the church!"

The weapon flashed, and the bullet went singing over the edge of the battlement, nearly striking Father Innocent, who immediately stamped on the roof and called out:

Drive them away, brethren!"

In a moment came a succession of spitting flashes from the summit of the convent, and the men on the raft seemed to be seized with a panic, for they seized their oars and began to pull as hard as they could toward the further shore; while Herrendeen saw the leader himself drop in the midst of them as if he had been hit. An impulse he could not resist made the scout level his rifle over the battlement, and he was about to send a messenger after the raft, when Father Innocent, who was close beside him, seized his arm and cried angrily:

"What would you do? When I give the order, it is time to act. Do you not see they are going away? The church does not punish for vengeance, and those men are my children!"

To the amazed scout, it seemed, at that moment, as if the quiet, grave priest, in whom he had seen hitherto only the mildest of men, had suddenly grown to gigantic stature, so imposing was his attitude. He dropped his rifle at once, impressed with the majesty of the man, and said:

"I ax yer pardon, father. I thought I was doing right."

The Superior seemed to be mollified by his submission, for he added in a gentler tone:

"We do not kill willingly; and not a man of those on the raft deserves death, as yet. The man who defied us has met his punishment, and the rest have obeyed. It is enough."

He made a sign to the rest of the defenders of the convent, and they quietly left the roof, while the father himself called White Falcon to his side and held with her a long conversation in French, at the end of which he called Herrendeen, and said to him, in his usual grave way:

"Young man, the White Falcon, as you call her, has told me that you love her, and would make her your wife. Do you know who she is, and are you willing to take the risk of offending powerful enemies by marrying her?"

The question took the young man aback, so much that he could only stammer:

"Ef I thought she'd have me, sir—"

"That is not the question," said the priest, in a still graver tone. "I will tell you what I mean by and by. You have come alone with her to this place, and your and her enemies are round us. I have driven them away, because they have no right to say anything to her; but there are coming those who will have a right. The church does not sanction disobedience from children to parents; but neither will it part husband and wife, if once they are joined. You say you are willing to marry her, without knowin' who she is, or in what manner the marriage will affect her and you. Do you mean that?"

The scout trembled as he replied, brokenly:

"She's as beautiful as an angel, and I love her, father. That's all I kin say. I know I ain't good enough for her, and that she knows a heap more than I do now. But ef it will save her from marrying that 'ere Sitting Bull, I'm ready to do anything for her sake."

The priest nodded gravely.

"Then you are willing to do what I order you, if by that means you may bring her happiness?"

"I am," said Nevermiss, solemnly.

White Falcon had been listening to him as the priest questioned him, with an anxious brow; but now she brightened up, and whispered something to the Superior, who nodded his head and said:

"I will attend to it, daughter."

He cast another glance at the lake, where the raft, by this time, had nearly reached the further shore, and then turned away to the staircase, saying to the scout:

"Follow me."

Herrendeen obeyed, wondering more and more what all this mystery about White Falcon could be, and his conductor took him to a door in the middle of a long corridor, which he opened, and showed Herrendeen a square stone chamber, in which a humble cot bed was the only piece of furniture.

"There is your bed for to-night," he said. "In the morning, if you hold the same mind, I will tell you what has been decided on. In the meantime you have done well to obey my word. I am about to go to the camp of those Indians on the other side of the lake. Have no fears; for not one of them would dare to hurt me. On what I hear there will depend whether you are made happy in the morning or not. Good-night."

He retired from the room and shut the door.

Herrendeen had given up his weapons a second time, all but the knife, which was in his girdle, and as the priest closed the door, he heard him shoot some bars into place, and realized that he was, as far as his freedom was concerned, in a veritable prison, from which he could not escape.

At first he felt angry at what he thought a deception; but as he went to the window and looked out, he saw that his casement commanded a view of the opposite shore, and that no communication could take place between the convent and the shore of which he would not be cognizant.

The window itself was a small one, and its size was further diminished by the fact that it was barred with iron in such a way that it would be impossible for him to get out, even though getting out would have been useless.

The descent therefrom was a sheer drop of some fifty feet on sharp, jagged rocks that jutted out from the foot of the wall, and had the lake on the other side.

He went to the door and tried it, to find that it was made of heavy timbers, and seemed, from the way in which it resisted his efforts to shake it, to be as solid as the wall itself.

Then he returned to the window and looked out again.

He could see the camp-fires of the Indians on the other side; the raft lying on the low marshy bank by this time, while the people over there seemed to be disturbed, for they were moving to and fro like a swarm of bees.

As he watched he heard the dip of paddles below, and presently cut from the shadow of the wall shot a birch canoe, the first he had seen, for they are not used by the prairie Indians.

The graceful little craft was propelled by four men in black, while in the stern sat the Superior of the convent; and the canoe was darting to,

ward the other shore with a rapidity very different from the slow progress of the dug-out, in which he had voyaged that day with White Falcon.

Herrendeen watched it as it glided on, and as it neared the further shore saw that its appearance produced a great hubbub among the Indians by the raft, for they came running down to the shore to watch it, and he fancied that he could almost hear the buzz, so still was the night and the convent.

He saw the canoe pause at a little distance from the shore, about a mile from the convent and remain stationary for a while.

The raft was covered with Indians, and the two parties seemed to be holding a conference. Then he saw the Indians retire from the raft, all but one man, and the canoe glided near to the big structure.

A little later, the single figure was seen to enter the canoe, which glided back toward the island convent, much to the surprise of the young scout, who could not contain his curiosity to know what the conference and visit could mean.

He watched the canoe as it approached the island, and as it drew nearer and nearer, he saw that the Indian who had entered the canoe was seated by the Father Superior, and seemed to be on good terms with him.

Closer and closer it came, and at last was so near him, under the walls, that he could hear the voices of the Superior and the Indian, as they appeared to be in talk.

They were speaking French, which he did not understand; but as the canoe shot under his window by the steps, he heard the priest say:

"Monsieur le Taureau Sistant—"

And something else that he did not understand, which only whetted his curiosity.

For he had heard the French trappers too often speak of the renowned warrior of the Sioux to fail to recognize the name when he heard it.

The man in the canoe was Sitting Bull himself.

For a moment the blood flowed to the heart of the young scout, and he felt a sense of faintness; then it rushed back and he tingled with excitement, as he realized that the man of all others whom he had reason to fear was coming to the convent, on apparently friendly terms with its chief, and that he himself was a prisoner in a cell from which he could not escape.

What was the Sitting Bull doing there, and why had the Jesuit locked him up before he let in his rival?

As he thought over all these things, the scout ground his teeth and said to himself:

"George, they've fooled ye!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MIDNIGHT MARRIAGE.

For nearly an hour after he had recognized the figure of the great Sioux warrior entering the convent, George Herrendeen paced the stone floor of his cell desperately, unable to think of any way by which he could escape from the peril of his position. He had made up his mind that the priest had betrayed him, and yet could not see how it was that the girl whom he loved had, as it seemed, helped in the deception.

She had persuaded him to give up his arms; the priest had decoyed him into the cell and gone for his rival, and here he was, like a mouse in a trap.

"A reg'lar trap," he muttered to himself; "and no way to git out, that I see. What shall I do?"

All the weapon that he had was his knife; and what use was that? He got more and more desperate as the hours went, and still no symptom that any thought was being given to him, till it at last occurred to him:

"Why shouldn't I get out of the window?"

He had thought of it and dismissed the scheme before, on looking out between the bars; but now a sudden thought made the scheme feasible. There were blankets on his bed, and he had a knife. Why should he not pick away the masonry from round the iron bars, and make a cord of the bedclothes, by which he could let himself down into the water, if, indeed, a leap would not carry him far enough out from the jagged rocks under the wall to enable him to strike the water and swim away?

"I'll try it," he said, resolutely. "I can't but git killed; and that ain't any worse than stayin' hyar, to be smothered, like a rat in a trap."

With that he set to work at the window, picking away the mortar between the stones, and found it easy enough to accomplish, though that promised to be the least part of the work. The sides of the window, the lintel and sill, were alike made of single slabs of a soft limestone that seemed to be that of the country, and he would be obliged to send them out bodily, if he expected to get out of the window.

But the work gave him occupation and prevented him from thinking of his situation. It also prevented him from hearing a slight noise at the door, which he might have heard had he not been so busy; and he was startled beyond measure by the sudden withdrawal of the bolts

of his prison, and wheeled round, knife in hand, expecting to see a foe.

Instead of this, he was confronted by the figure of White Falcon herself. The girl had a light in her hand, while her face wore an expression of anxiety and fear.

She came in softly and closed the door behind her before she said a word.

Then she whispered:

"Did you see him come in?"

"I saw a man, and heard the priest you call Father Innocent, call him Sitting Bull," he answered, in a constrained way. "Is this why you brought me hyar, White Falcon, to sell me to him?"

"I knew no more than you did that he was coming," she said, quickly. "I do not believe that Father Innocent knew, when he went away, that the chief wasthere. He has told me all, and what to do. It depends on you whether Sitting Bull succeeds or not."

"What do you mean?" he asked, surprised.

She put down the light.

"Will you listen to me a moment, while I speak, and promise that you will not suspect me?"

"Sartainly I will, White Falcon. Whether I ought to suspect ye, ye know best yerself."

The girl seemed to be pained by his tone, for she said, sadly:

"Yes, I know it seems to you as if I had betrayed you; but you will know better when I have done what I mean."

Then she began her story:

"You do not know even who I am, and yet you said you were willing to trust me to the end. If you love me, as you said you did, you will continue to trust me still."

"I'm willin' to trust you, any time, White Falcon," he said, with a voice that trembled somewhat. "If I did suspect ye, a moment, it was only when I found that the man ye told me to trust had locked me in hyar, and then gone and brought the man in that you was runnin' from."

"And that is the reason I am here," she replied. "I will tell you all about it, as Father Innocent has told me. He had no idea that Sitting Bull was over there when he went to the raft. He thought it was only a fight got up by that man, Louis Riel, who has been trying to stir up the Indians to attack the British Government for years. He has told me that, when he got to the raft, at first, he saw there were none there but strange Indians, whom he did not know, and the men of Riel. And when he asked for the chief, Sitting Bull, whom he had never seen before, came forward, and told him that he had been sent by my father to demand his daughter, and that Big Bear had consented that I should be his wife."

Herrendeen muttered a curse under his breath; but the girl did not notice him and went on:

"Father Innocent told him, as he had told Riel, that I was under the protection of the church, and that he could not give me up unless I said I was willing to go. And then Sitting Bull asked leave to come here alone and try to persuade me; and the father told him that if he would give up his arms and enter the convent as other people did, submitting to the rules he could come. And the chief consented and has come here. He is locked up in a cell, just as you are; and in the morning he and you will be confronted and be able to plead your cause before the Father Superior."

"And suppose Sitting Bull wants to take ye, and ye say ye don't want to go?" asked Nevermiss.

The girl colored and cast down her eyes.

"Father Innocent says there is only one way in which he can protect me."

"And what is that?" asked he, eagerly.

Her voice was almost inaudible as she said:

"He told me that the church could protect me if I was married, but in no other way."

"And is he willing that you shall marry me?" the scout asked, still more eagerly.

A slight smile played on her lips as she answered:

"The priests hold midnight mass at the chapel, and if we go there and demand his services, he cannot refuse. But you must make the demand."

Herrendeen replaced in his girdle the knife with which he had been working, and said resolutely, as he went toward her:

"Hyar am I, White Falcon! If you'll marry me, I'm ready to ax all the priests in Canady to tie the knot. Will ye show me the way to the chapel or not?"

She rose and took his arm, and led the way, without a word, into the dark corridor, outside the cell.

A dim light was seen at the end of the long passage, and a flight of steps led on in a downward direction.

As they set out on their journey, the great bell of the convent began to toll slowly, and she whispered:

"That is the signal for midnight mass. We are in time yet."

As they advanced through the corridors, they became sensible that others were abroad besides them, and beheld long rows of dark figures com-

ing along the dark passages, all going in the same direction.

Herrendeen could not avoid a sense of awe at the silence with which every one moved, and they soon found themselves in the chapel, where the only light came from the candles on the high altar, and where the low, solemn tones of the organ, and the chanting of an unseen choir, added to the effect of the midnight mass. White Falcon led him to a place behind one of the pillars, where she signed to him to kneel with her, and the service proceeded; the first that the scout had ever seen.

When the mass was over and the priests were about to depart, she nodded to him, and he rose and led her to the front of the altar, where he saw Father Innocent, in his gorgeous robes of office, looking at him as if surprised at his audacity.

But the scout was not to be put down by a look, when he had something so near his heart; and he boldly addressed the priest, asking him:

"Father, kin I say a word to ye now?"

The Superior bowed his head.

"The ears of the church are always open to the words of her sons. What do you wish?"

"I want to marry this hyar lady," said Herrendeen, as boldly as before. "She says she's willing, and we want to be tied so fast, no one can't untie the knot, right off."

The priest turned to White Falcon, and asked her:

"Are you willing to take this man for your husband or not?"

She bowed her head, and the priest opened a book, and at once began saying some words in Latin, which the scout did not in the least understand, but which he supposed to be all right. When it came to the questions which are necessary, Father Innocent put them in English, first to Herrendeen and then to the girl; and inside of ten minutes from the time they came before the altar, pronounced the words:

"I pronounce you man and wife. Whom God hath joined, let no man put asunder."

The scout understood that part of the service, and what he ought to do; so he proceeded to give his new-made bride the first kiss he had ever ventured, and then offered his arm and was going to lead her down the aisle in triumph, when the priest said in a low tone:

"Come and sign the register. It is necessary that everything should be done in order."

A little later they were in a small room, in which they were joined by the priest, who had removed his robes and appeared in the black cassock of his order. He gave them a book, which he required them both to sign, and Herrendeen affixed his name, in a large, bold hand, while the girl he had just married wrote, in small, neat letters:

"VICTORIA GUELPH."

Father Innocent noticed the way in which the scout looked at the name, and asked him, with a slight smile:

"Did you ever hear that name before?"

Herrendeen shook his head.

"Not as I know of, father. White Falcon is the only name I ever heard of her; but if so be as her name is Victory, it's a mighty pretty name, and that's all I have to say about it."

Then he added:

"And now, father, if it ain't axin' too much, what are we to do about that man ye let into the house? I mean Sittin' Bull?"

The priest smiled.

"You have nothing to fear from him now. You are the husband of this lady, and the church will protect you both. You are free to stay or depart, whichever you think best."

Then he added, slowly:

"You are free to stay or depart; but, if you are sensible, you will take your departure at once, for the church holds but a precarious dominion over these wild Indians, and if you are away we can admit them to the island, and let them see for themselves that their search is fruitless."

Herrendeen nodded emphatically.

"That's the ticket I'm arter, father. I'm ready to go this moment, and the sooner the better, if we kin take our hosses and go."

"You can have them at once," said Father Innocent; "and the brothers shall row you over to the secret path by the mountain, where you will have a start of three days, if your foos choose to follow you. My blessing on you both."

Half an hour later, Herrendeen and White Falcon, as we shall continue to call his wife, were embarked in a large flat-boat, being rowed by a crew of the lay brothers of the convent, with muffled oars, behind the shelter of the island, under the shadow of the huge mountain to a place that no one would have suspected, from any part of the lake, where the mountain made a little cove, with a sandy beach.

Here they were landed, with their horses and arms, and saw before them, in the moonlight, a dark tunnel, leading apparently into the bowels of the mountain which towered above their heads.

The lay brothers bid them farewell, and White Falcon, taking the bridle of her pony in one hand, led the way, Herrendeen following without hesitation, till they had entered the cavern

and found that they were on a broad, sandy road at the further end of which they saw a gleam of light, as if the moon was shining in at the mouth of a natural tunnel.

It took them some time to traverse the windings of what seemed to be a very large cavern; but it was not nearly so dark as the scout had expected from the blackness of the entrance.

There was a light shining in at either end, and the further they advanced the brighter grew the light toward which they were going.

At last White Falcon said in a tone of relief:

"We are almost there. Yonder lies the opening, and beyond it all the Sioux in the country can never catch us."

Her words were realized a little later, when they came out into the full light of the moon, which had just passed her highest point.

Before them lay a beautiful champaign country, where the gleam of water at various points showed that rivers were plentiful, and here White Falcon pointed to the west, saying:

"From here to the Pacific Ocean there is nothing to stop us till we get to the mountains that overlook it. And every step of the way the climate grows warmer."

"And how about the way to the South?" he asked. "My place is thar, White Falcon, and that's the place whar we've got to go in the end, if you ain't set on stickin' in this country. I was born under the Stars and Stripes, and that's whar I want to die."

She turned to him with an affectionate gesture, saying as she did it:

"Where you go, I will go, too; and your people shall be mine in the future."

"Then which is the way thar?" he asked.

She pointed along the side of the chain of mountains which he now perceived, divided them from the place they had just left.

"Yonder lies our way," she said, "but it will be full of peril. To get there, we must pass through the country of my people, and they may be angry to see me with you. But if you say so, that is our way."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FORT.

THE sentry on the ramparts of Fort Garry, the day after the flight of Herrendeen and White Falcon from the clutches of their foes, was surprised to see, coming from the northeast over the green prairie that lay round the fort, two horsemen, with quite a large party of Indians behind them in close pursuit.

He alarmed the fort at once, for the tenure of authority over the wild hordes of the Northwest, by the handful of mounted police that keep them in subjection, is sustained only by constant vigilance and unhesitating acceptance of danger.

The fort was a bastioned square, surrounding the stables of the horsemen and the garrison was a single company of about a hundred men, with Gatling guns mounted at the angles of the fort, commanding all the sides, to add to the strength of such small numbers.

The commanding officer was the Major Roberts who had welcomed Herrendeen when he first came over the line, and he had his men at their posts in such a short time that the fugitives could hardly get near the gate before it was flung open to them to ride in, and slammed behind them before their pursuers could get in after them.

The major recognized the hunter who had met him, by Batouche, a few days before, and the white-clad figure of the mysterious girl whose possession had become a matter of struggle between so many persons.

He saw that she and the hunter rode on horses that were nearly fagged out with hard galloping, and that their foes were strange Indians of the bands that had recently come from the South, and were camped at Milk river, not many miles from the fort.

They came streaming after the two fugitives, as if determined to catch them, and set up a great yell when they at last ran them into the fort, as if they thought they had them safe at last.

Looking from the watch-tower which commanded a view of some thirty or forty miles over the dead flat of the prairie, he saw that the Indians were coming straight from the camp of the Sioux, and that they were strung out in a long file, reaching for miles, as if the alarm had been slowly spread in the camp, and the men were still coming.

The major looked vexed at the sight, and muttered to himself as he saw the scene:

"Wish Brother Jonathan would keep his own red-men quiet, without asking us to help him. We have enough trouble with our own, without having to take care of our neighbors' troublesome persons for them. I wonder what's the matter now?"

He remained on the watch-tower for some time, as long as he saw that the Indians outside had not made any preparations to attack the building in which he was; but as they continued to increase, he descended to the gate and found, in the square inclosure in the center of the fort,

the two fugitives, whom he addressed coldly, asking:

"Well, what have you been doing, to get into trouble with the Indians?"

The white hunter answered at once:

"We haint done nothen', major, but try and ride by them, peaceable and quiet; and they have come out arter us and chased us. This is my wife, sir, and that 'ere Sitting Bull wants to git her; that's all I know of."

The major looked at the hunter and then at the girl, as if much surprised.

"Your wife?" he said. "Since when? Where were you married, and by whom?"

The girl, who had said nothing hitherto, here pulled from her pocket a folded paper, which she handed to the major, saying:

"This is the certificate of Father Innocent, of the Society of Jesus, who performed the ceremony, major. I hope that is satisfactory."

The major took it and looked at it narrowly, when he returned it to her, and said coldly:

"Certainly, if you pleased to do it; though, if I had been in your place—"

He did not finish, but shrugged his shoulders as he looked at the hunter who had become the husband of White Falcon, as if he wondered at her taste.

What the girl might have said in answer to this rather scornful look, is uncertain; for at that moment they heard the high-pitched voice of an Indian outside, shouting out something which the major knew to be a summons to a parley; and he turned away ill-temperedly, saying:

"These confounded Yankees Indians are more trouble than all we have in the Dominion."

The two fugitives remained where he had left them, standing by the gate, and heard the parley, as the Indian outside shouted his demands, and the officer of police answered them.

As soon as the major made his appearance at the tower above the gate, he saw a tall, good-looking young Indian, who called out impudently:

"We want the man and the woman that have just entered your place. They belong to us."

"And who are you?" asked the major.

The Indian puffed out his chest with an air of great importance as he answered:

"I am the man that struck the Long Hair when all the warriors hung back. I am Rain-in-the-Face, the greatest warrior of the Northwest."

Herrendeen heard him, and started at the words:

"What's that he said?" he asked White Falcon, in a low voice. "Does he brag he's the man that killed the gin'r'l?"

The girl looked at him as if somewhat alarmed at the expression of his face.

"What is the matter?" she whispered. "What was he to you, that this should make you angry?"

Herrendeen made an impatient motion.

"Hush! listen to what he is saying."

Then they heard the major answer:

"I don't care whether you are Rain-in-the-Face or Sitting Bull himself; you have got to behave yourself up here. You are not in the South where the Great father lets you do what you want to, but up in the country of the White Mother, who treats her children well, but makes them behave themselves."

The scout nodded his head emphatically.

"That's the talk," he muttered. "If our folks gave 'em the same, we wouldn't have no trouble with them, clarn their skins."

"I am Rain-in-the-Face," reiterated the Indian outside, striking his breast proudly, "and what I say I mean. We are the great nation of the Sioux, and we care no more for the White Mother than for the Great Father. Two people have just come into your place, and we want them. If they are not given up, you will have trouble with all of us."

The major bit his lips and looked down at the vaporizing Indian with an air as if he were debating what to do.

Rain-in-the-Face continued to boast of his deeds, and his friends, who had gathered round the gate, yelled their sympathy and approval of his proceedings, till the major saw that there was no help for it but a fight, to show who was the master.

He beckoned to the Indian that he had something to say and Rain-in-the-Face called out:

"Are you going to give us the people who have fled to you, or shall we fight you as we did the Long Hair?"

"I will not give you the people who have fled to me for help," was the deliberate reply of the officer. "and if you do not get away from the gate you will have trouble."

The Indian began to vapor again, when the chief of the fort gave a signal to some of his men who were standing by him.

Then, out of a port-hole, over the gate, where a tower of heavy green logs had been constructed, came the bundle of barrels that every Indian outside knew well to be the muzzle of a Gatling gun, and a shower of bullets went whizzing over the head of the dauntless Rain-in-the-Face and his comrades, plowing up the ground all round them, and sending them off at full speed

Herrendeen smote his knee with his hand in delight at the way in which they had been scattered; but he was somewhat disappointed when the firing ceased and he saw that not an Indian had been hurt or even a pony.

The fire of the Gatling had been sent over their heads on purpose, and it was the sight of the bullets, knocking up the dust in clouds, in close proximity to their horses' feet, that had convinced even Rain-in-the-Face that discretion was the better part of valor.

Then the major came back to them, as they stood in the central court, and said to Herrendeen:

"I've sent those fellows away for you; but I am not equal to the task of taking care of you if the whole tribe is in earnest. Why can't you and your wife go back where you came from? The border is not more than fifty miles off, and they won't dare to follow you into Yankee territory."

"That's jest the very place we're going to," the scout replied, heartily; "but sence we've b'en hyar, major, I've h'ard suthin' that makes me change my mind. Didn't thet feller say he was the man that killed the Long Hair, and didn't he mean my gin'r'l, that was killed at the Big Horn, only three months ago?"

The major seemed disturbed as he glanced at the scout.

"Well, and suppose he did; what of that? You can't settle old scores in the queen's dominions. If he and you meet on Yankee soil you can fight all you want; but here you've got to keep the peace, or we take a hand in ourselves."

Herrendeen nodded his assent.

"That's all right, major; but what I axed was, whether he warn't the man?"

"He says he was," replied the major; "but you can't believe a word he says, anyhow."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PARTING.

"THAT's all right, major," repeated the scout, as he had done before; "but that's what he said, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is," was the reply.

Then Herrendeen nodded again, and said no more, till he had examined his rifle and pistols. That done, he looked at his wife, and asked the major:

"If I git out of hyar, take my chances among the Injuns outside, and leave my wife hyar, kin you take keer of her, major?"

The officer looked surprised.

"Why, of course we can. She is in no danger here; but you would be in a great deal if you went out alone. What do you propose to do?"

Nevermiss slapped the breech of his rifle.

"You say the border ain't more'n fifty mile away, and that them Injuns gives you a good deal of trouble. It's all on account of me and White Falcon, and she ain't in no danger as long as I'm away from her. I'll tell ye what I'm going to do, major. I'm going to trade hosses with some man hyar that's got a fresh beast. Mine's as good as any ever stepped; but he's nigh tucker out. Then I'm goin' out to take keer of myself, and I ain't comin' back hyar, till either them red cusses is back in the United States, or gone from hyar, so that things is peaceable-like. I come hyar alone, and I'll go back alone. I don't want to be beholden to nobody, 'specially to a Britisher, for my life. Will you trade me a hoss, or won't ye?"

The major looked at him with a great deal more respect than he had yet shown.

"I certainly can let you have a fresh horse; but wouldn't it be better for you to stay here with your wife till your own is rested? He is a good beast, and it is a shame to leave him. I am not sure if I have as good a one in the fort. And for you to go out now, while the Indians are full of excitement, would be little short of suicide."

The scout shrugged his shoulders.

"Look hyar, major," he said, addressing the officer with a mixture of familiarity and respect, to which he had become used in his intercourse with the regulars on the other side of the borders; "if I'm willing to take the risk, it's nobody's business but my own. If I git wiped out no one won't suffer for it but myself—"

"And your wife," interrupted the major, looking at White Falcon, who had said nothing.

The brows of the scout contracted slightly as he replied:

"I didn't need to be reminded of that, major, I think. But then my wife and me, we ain't the same as other folks. I know she's higher than I be, and that's suthin' in her that your folks here in Canady seems to think a heap of, which I don't understand. Seems she's some relation to the queen, some way, and ye think she lowered herself by marryin' me. All I want is to see her safe hyar, while I go out. If I leave her hyar, kin I depend on one thing, major, that you don't give her up to no Sittin' Bull?"

"You can depend on that, at all events," said the major, heartily. "Whatever else we might do, there is one thing about Victoria that would prevent us from giving her up to any Indian that ever stepped, without her own consent."

Herrendeen noticed the name he gave her and asked him curiously:

"What makes you call her Victoria?"

"Because that is the name by which we know her—the Princess Victoria, of the Crees. When her father dies, she will be head-chief in his place," replied the major. "But that is not the question now. Hadn't you better wait till night and take her with you? Then you would both be safe. They won't dare to follow you in the night, you know."

Herrendeen shook his head as he looked at his wife. Something seemed to be the matter between the two of them, and the major saw it, but did not like to ask what it was. The girl did not offer any objection to his departure, and the scout had an air as of a man who had some secret sorrow to conceal.

"No, major," he said, "what's best is best. I'll go out and take my chances of gettin' to the border alone, and she's safe hyar. All I ax is a fresh hoss to give me a good run."

"That you shall have," said the major, heartily, and he preceded the young hunter to the stable, where stood a row of sleek, well-fed horses, one of which he ordered out for Herrendeen.

The saddle was transferred from the tired pony he had ridden into the fort, and the scout mounted the new animal, which began to snort and rear in a way that showed it had plenty of spirit to make a journey. The major noticed that he did not offer to take leave of his wife, and that she, on her part, averted her face from him, as he went.

He rode to the gate of the fort, and it was thrown open to him, not an Indian being near.

Outside he waved his hand and called out to the girl who had come to the gate to see him off and stood there listlessly, as if she had no fears or cares about his fate:

"Good-by, White Falcon," he cried, in a voice that broke slightly. "If I don't come back ye'll know that they've got me."

"You will come back," she called out, in a ringing tone that surprised the major. "If I had not known you were what you are, I should not have trusted you, as I have. When you come back all will be well."

There was a ring of something like triumphant confidence in her tones as she spoke, and the young scout flushed high as he heard it, and waved his hand for the last time, answering:

"You choose it, White Falcon, not I. If I git through safe, and we meet again, I'll claim the promise yo gave me."

"And you shall have it," she answered.

Then he turned his horse's head and rode out into the prairie, taking a course to the south in full view of hundreds of Indians who were hovering round the fort after their late lesson from the Gatling, as if they did not know whether to advance or not.

The moment they saw him, their ponies were whipped and lashed to speed, as they set off at a tearing pace to catch the daring scout.

The people on the rampart of the fort could see them coming toward him from all points of the compass, and the major muttered:

"He'll never get through. They'll have his scalp, surely, before night."

He heard a scornful laugh behind him, and looking round saw the singular girl called "White Falcon" and "Victoria Guelph" indiscriminately standing by him and watching the progress of the scout with a smile of confident security.

"Well," said the rough soldier, rather stiffly, "it seems to me that for a woman who has just married that man you take his danger very coolly, Miss Victoria."

The girl laughed again in the same scornful way as she retorted:

"He stands in no danger, major, when I am not near him. You'll see; he will scare them all from his path as easily as you did from this fort."

As she spoke they saw the scout, who had been riding off at a rapid gallop owing to the impatience of his horse, which was fresh from the stable, slacken his pace and come to a walk in the grass, while he laid his rifle across his knee and glanced back over his shoulder.

The nearest Indians quickened their pace with exultant yells, and the scout halted in the place where he was, and deliberately dismounted. It seemed like suicide to do such a thing, in the presence of at least a hundred men, who were within half a mile of him; but the next minute came a flash from over the saddle of the new horse, which had been trained to stand still in such a case, and down went the leading Indian in a heap, while the rest gave a wild, wailing yell, and went on faster than ever. The major had a powerful field-glass, which he put to his eye, and saw that the scout was coolly blowing the smoke from the barrel of his rifle, while he prepared to put in another cartridge. Another moment the long rifle was leveled again, and down tumbled a second Indian, as if the aim of the marksman had been deadly to the last degree.

The second shot produced a wavering of pace, and brought all the Indians over the sides of their horses, to cover.

The major, looking through the glass, saw that Herrendeen was blowing the smoke away, and putting in another cartridge.

A third time the deadly rifle was leveled over the back of the horse, and down went another Indian, pony and all, as if the bullet had gone through both man and horse.

The major uttered a cry of surprise as he saw the scene through the glass; and White Falcon, by his side, laughed as she said:

"I told you he was in no danger, major. If your men could shoot like that, you need build no more forts."

The third shot of the dauntless scout brought a complete halt of his enemies, and they fell back and began to skirt off to the right and left, as if trying to get before him and intercept him in the way that he must pass.

The major, watching, saw the rifle taken down from the saddle of the horse, when Herrendeen slowly remounted his animal and set off at the easy canter which a man affects in a long journey on the plains.

He showed no more concern at the presence of the savages that were on his trail than if they had been so many children; and they, on their part, seemed to have acquired a wholesome respect for him, for they confined themselves to skirting as far away from him as they could, endeavoring to get before him by crossing his path.

In this way they watched him from the ramparts of the fort, till his figure was lost on the ocean of grass, while the forms of his pursuers were only barely distinguishable as dots on the green.

Then the major said to White Falcon, as he prepared to go down:

"I suppose you will go back to your father's camp, now that you have got rid of that Yankee hunter. What made a girl like you, who might have had some of the best in the land, take up with an ignorant lout like him?"

As he spoke the girl favored him with a glance that he hardly understood, as she answered:

"As you say, I might have had the best men in the dominion; but I did not fancy them. I have heard so much fine language all my life, from you gentlemen of the army, that I took a fancy to see what a man would do who knows nothing of my history and what I am. I have found out that this man you call ignorant, has a heart as true as any gentleman of the best blood of the land you came from, major. He has shown a faith that might have put a knight of old to shame, and when he comes back the proudest lady in England might be honored by his company."

The major smiled with some sarcasm, as he replied in a rather sneering manner:

"Then what made you let him go off?"

White Falcon turned her face toward him with a look of reproof, as she answered him:

"You ought to know, as well as I, that his life was not safe here till the Sioux have left the country. They have given the United States all the trouble they could, and now they have come here. Before long you will be as tired of them as are the United States. He has gone back to his own country, on a message from me that will bring him back again before long. When he comes back you will see what he is capable of. Till then I am going to return to my own people. I am safe now, as I was not before."

The major seemed to be surprised at what she said, for he exclaimed:

"But you will not surely go back to your own people while these wild Sioux are here, and when the Sitting Bull wants to marry you? What will you do to keep him off?"

"That is for the future to decide," she replied, calmly. "I am going now."

And she took her horse soon after, and rode out into the prairie, where, as soon as she made her appearance, the Indians rode toward her.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE CAMP.

Out in the encampment of the confederated Crees and Stone Indians, on the day when the White Falcon and Nevermiss made their escape to Fort Garry, Big Bear and Poundmaker were seated in the guest tepee from which Herrendeen had gone forth to the hunt which had terminated in his runaway with White Falcon, and the brows of both chiefs were clouded, as if they felt ill at ease with themselves and the world.

The Indians in the camp outside seemed to be in their quietest mood, for the fall hunt had been terminated and the squaws were cleaning the skins and curing the meat for the winter, making pemmican-bags and filling them, while the men were asleep in their tents.

The two chiefs were alone and conversed in French, which seemed to be easier to them than any Indian tongue.

Poundmaker said to his friend, thoughtfully:

"This Riel means well, but we are not ready for any such action as he wants, and if we try it, we shall get the worst of it."

Big Bear nodded.

"That is true; but the young men cannot learn that yet. They think they have only to rise, and the soldiers will all run away. Then the coming of these men from the country of the Yankees has stirred them all up, and there will

be no holding them if we cannot devise a means for keeping the strangers quiet."

"Then why did you promise that White Falcon should be given to this strange chief?" asked Poundmaker. "If the marriage is once celebrated and the tribes united, there will be no way of preventing a fight."

Big Bear stirred uneasily.

"That is what makes me wonder whether they got off—the White Falcon and the Far Fighter. If he could have married her there would have been a great trouble for us, but no fighting with the soldiers of the queen."

Poundmaker leaned forward and tapped his friend on the knee.

"Then why not let the man have her?"

Big Bear shook his head gloomily.

"It is useless to think of it. These Sioux have better arms than we have, by far; and they are old fighters, while our men are softened by the long enjoyment of peace. I would not dare to say anything that would make them enemies; but if—"

"But if what?" asked his friend.

The old chief stirred uneasily.

"If the young man could have stolen her away, and carried her off to the South country, without my knowledge, all might have been well. But what is the use of thinking of it? They have gone after him and her, and they must have caught them before this. Riel is a man who makes everything go the way he wants it. But it is time that we had some news of them. Riel would have come back ere this if they had been caught; and there was no escape from their being caught, unless they—"

"Unless they got to the convent," said Poundmaker, finishing the sentence.

Big Bear nodded his head, but added slowly:

"But she would never have dared to lead him to the only place, that none know of but ourselves and the black fathers. It would be as much as her life was worth, as well as his."

Poundmaker smiled slightly.

"My friend," he said, in a way that showed that, if he were really an Indian, he was yet above all the superstitions of his class, "it is well enough for us to keep up an appearance of mystery, before the men of the tribe, about the Convent of the Lost Mountain; but we both know very well that, as soon as the railroad comes through the great plains, there is no longer any secrecy for us. The buffalo and hunter must go, and the ox and plowman take their place. What if the wit of this girl should see a way to cut the knot that we have been so long in tying? If we should hear that she had gained the convent with this strange hunter, and the secret were to be revealed, it might only hasten a thing which we both have seen for years must come at last. These Sioux are standing in the light of the sun, and they will not be allowed forever. Our chance has not come yet; and will not, till we have learned to fight like the white man, and to make his weapons."

"And when will that be?" asked the Cree chief.

The answer that his companion was about to give was interrupted by a great noise in the camp, and Big Bear started up, saying:

"They have come in at last. If the white hunter has been captured, remember that he must not be put to the torture. It may do for the men of the South, but not for us. If we red-men are ever to show that we are worthy of being allowed to manage our own concerns, we must begin by being the same as the whites, in war and peace."

Poundmaker nodded, and the two chiefs went to the door of the guest-tepee, whence they saw a crowd of horsemen, coming from the northern prairies, whipping their ponies, while the red streamers and war-bonnets of the leaders gave token that it was a war-party that was coming, though in the midst of profound peace.

As the war-party came nearer they could see, also, that it was composed almost entirely of the strange Indians that had lately come in from the United States, with a few Blackfeet, and quite a number of the half-breed residents of Batouche, headed by the redoubtable Riel.

The half-breed chief had his arm in a sling, and one of his legs was bandaged up with a white cloth, as if he had been wounded, while, beside him, they saw the striped calico shirt and dark blanket that marked the person of the chief of the Sioux confederates.

The Sitting Bull, according to his custom, had no arms, though he rode among the warriors, and as he came to the guest-tepee he bowed politely to the chiefs at the doorway, pulled up his pony, and came to the ground.

His friends dismounted and made a circle at a little distance round the doorway, and a short, whispered conversation ensued between Riel and the Sioux, before the latter entered the tent and took his seat near the door, holding in his hand the sacred pipe of peace and council.

Big Bear and Poundmaker both saw that something had happened which required an explanation, and that the faces of Riel and Sitting Bull were both grave, not to say angry.

The two old chiefs said nothing till the pipe had been lighted and passed round from one to the other, when Riel was the first to break the silence, by saying, in a sullen tone:

"The daughter of Big Bear has played us false, and the wrong must be righted."

Sitting Bull said nothing; but his eyes glowed like live coals, and he uttered a short grunt of approval. Big Bear waited for nearly a minute when he answered:

"Kiel is a man who tells nothing but the truth and scorns to have a forked tongue. Let him tell us what has happened."

Riel frowned in the same sullen manner.

"The woman had made it all up to cheat the chief of the Sioux, and she fled with the white hunter to the house of the black fathers. We followed her there, and chased her and him into the house. Then we went to the same house ourselves, and you can see what the black fathers did to me. Who are they, that they should dare to fire at the red-men, who owned this land before a white man was seen on our soil?"

Big Bear smoked tranquilly, and then asked in his coldest tones:

"Well, what did the fathers do that we would not have done? The house of the Lost Mountain has been sacred to all red-men since it was first built, many years ago. No man has profaned it without the wrath of the Great Spirit."

Riel curled his lip as he said in French, which he spoke all through the interview:

"The Great Spirit is a long way off; but the guns of the black fathers are very near. They shot me, and they cheated the Sitting Bull, who was deceived by them into going into their house. He can tell you what happened to him."

Big Bear looked at Poundmaker and the old chief returned the glance, while they waited for the Sioux chief to speak, which he presently did, in just as good French as they had used themselves.

He spoke in a low voice, without any appearance of passion, but his words were vicious:

"The black fathers asked me to enter their house, and then shut me in a room whence I could not escape till morning. Then they told me that the woman who had been promised me for a wife had fled in the night, and that she had been married to the white hunter."

"It is for the Big Bear and Poundmaker to say whether the war-hatchet shall be dug up or not. The Sioux are a great people and are not to be made fools of for nothing. The White Falcon was promised to me, and she must be my wife. I have spoken."

Riel nodded, as much as to say he agreed with the last speaker, and a profound silence fell on the tepee, which lasted for over a minute, when Big Bear spoke again:

"The Sitting Bull has been badly treated, but not by me. The black fathers have done this, and on them lie the blame. The Sitting Bull does not want to steal the wife of a stranger after the black fathers have blessed them."

Sitting Bull allowed the ghost of a smile to cross his face as he retorted:

"The white hunter has stolen my wife, and I am not a man who submits to a thief. The girl must be given back to me, and the man, too, to do with as I please."

Big Bear glanced at Poundmaker to request him to reply, and the Stone chief said:

"What the Sitting Bull has said is true. The girl is his wife, and he has liberty to take her wherever he finds her. But the Sioux are great warriors, and can surely take her back without help. What is one man, and a white man, to stand against the warrior who killed the Long Hair? Let the Sitting Bull go find his wife, and punish the man who has stolen her. We will not interfere with him."

Riel flushed angrily, and interrupted, in his usual petulant style:

"The girl has gone to the fort, and the young men have chased her in. We are strangers in the land, and we need help."

Big Bear curled his lip disdainfully.

"Who made Louis Riel a stranger in the land wherein he was born? Let the men of Batouche help the Sioux, if they wish. The Crees and the Assiniboines are children of the White Mother, who has never done them any harm. Let the Sioux attack the soldiers of the White Mother, if they are anxious for a fight. It is no place for us."

Poundmaker nodded assent, and added:

"The White Falcon, as we all know, is not subject to the laws of the red-men; and if the White Mother hears that she has been wronged, she will speak to all her children and tell them that they have no business with her child by blood. Let the Sitting Bull go to the fort, if he thinks that my tongue is forked, and learn for himself who and what is the White Falcon, that he wishes to take to his lodge."

Sitting Bull frowned for the first time in the interview, showing anger that he had hitherto concealed, as he said:

"It is well. Big Bear has broken his word, and his child shall pay for it. As for the white hunter, my young men have him ere this, and he shall be made a show for the camp. Let us go."

He rose, as if he had terminated the interview, and Riel rose with him, showing his anger with still less self-control, as he hissed out:

"White Falcon shall pay for this when we

get her. The White Mother cannot keep her forever."

Then he stalked out of the tepee and mounted his pony, followed by the Sioux chief, when both rode away, taking the direction of the fort, which lay at the distance of some twenty or thirty miles from the Cree camp.

By the time they had cleared the last tepee, Poundmaker had mounted his own pony, and had ridden after them, to watch what they did.

CHAPTER XX.

RUNNING THE GANTLET.

In the mean time the daring young hunter, who had ridden away from Fort Garry in such a rash manner, in the face of hundreds of foes thirsting for his blood, pursued his way tranquilly, as soon as he had beaten off the men who had at first followed him.

He and White Falcon had ridden, without rest, from the vicinity of the Lost Mountain, and had run into the Sioux scouts when in sight of the fort that morning.

It had been the intention of Herrendeen to escape over the border with his wife; but when they came near the fort they saw that it would be impossible to do it in the face of the fresh ponies that their foes were provided with, while their own animals were wearied with an eighty-mile ride at speed.

The way in which the Indians followed them up to the very gates had rendered the task of any escape together very difficult, and had inspired the young scout with the idea of trying the thing alone, and going over the border, if possible, to find enough troops to come back and get his wife by force, if necessary.

He knew that the border was full of United States soldiers who had been posted there since the escape of Sitting Bull, in case the daring Sioux should take it into his head to make raid's from the safe shelter of the Canadian frontier; and he trusted to getting some of these troops to go with him to the fort, to demand his wife.

He was ignorant of international law, and had an idea that if he could once get the troops across the frontier the English police would help them, after the insolent way in which the Indians had defied Major Roberts and the way in which he had been compelled to threaten them with the Gatling gun from the fort.

He had some fifty miles to go to the frontier, and did not anticipate any trouble in getting there, with his long-range rifle, for he had had experience of the fact that all the Indians feared to come within its range.

As the morning advanced, however, he saw that the Indians were skirting the plain at a long distance from him, but that already some of them had passed him and were beginning to converge together in his front.

This fact, for the first time, raised in his mind a vague sense of alarm, and he quickened his own pace, and rode steadily on to head them off, noticing as he did so that he was beginning to be surrounded, though at a long distance.

As he quickened his pace and rode faster, he found that he was leaving his foes, who were gathering on the flanks, a little to the rear, and that he had prevented them from getting in his immediate front.

But he soon found that, the moment he slackened his pace, his foes began to creep in on him, with a stealthy care that showed they were determined he should not escape if they could help it. They did not venture within gunshot; but they hung on his trail with tenacity that would not be shaken off; and so his ride continued, for hour after hour, till all at once, as he looked ahead, he saw, on the horizon, some distant specks which he knew at once to be horsemen, and which further developed into Indians, coming on in the straggling irregular column that marks a band on the march. Its pack-ponies and *travoises* showed this; the lodge poles trailing on the ground on either side of the ponies; the baggage of the camp piled on their backs and on the trailing sticks, while each pony's load was surmounted by a squaw, with half a dozen children, perhaps, as if it was impossible to overload the little horse, that went staggering along under its burden.

The sight caused a thrill in the mind of the scout, for he knew that the band, now advancing, could only be some fugitive Indians from the United States, and if so, they must be his bitter foes, more or less numerous.

The column of march, as it straggled along, was of considerable length, and though he could not count the pack-ponies he estimated that the band, now coming toward him, must be composed of at least sixty or seventy lodges, which would give it an available force of a hundred and fifty warriors or so.

Whether these warriors would actually attack him, being, as he knew they were, on neutral soil, was still a problem in his mind; but as he looked at them, and then at his late pursuers, he saw that the former were already beginning to "ride signals" to their friends in advance, telling them about who he was. The scout turned his pony, therefore, sharp to the right, and rode off, to get out of the way of the on-coming band.

But he had not gone far in the new direction before he saw that his flight was useless.

He was surrounded, and the exultation of his foes could be seen, from the fact that they had lost their timidity, and were beginning to ride boldly toward him, within gunshot.

He saw that he would have to submit to be taken captive at once, or sell his life dearly. His escape had become an impossibility.

The moment this fact became clear to him, he looked round for a place to defend himself to the last; and was not long in finding such.

Right before him was a little depression in the generally level prairie, where a crack in the soil had deepened and widened till it made a circular pit about four feet deep, a result in which it had been helped by the rolling of the buffalo in the mud in spring-time.

These "buffalo-wallows" are well known to all prairie-men, and have often been the scenes of desperate and successful defenses against odds.

"What's b'en done, kin be done again," muttered the dauntless scout; and with that he rode into the buffalo-wallow; dismounted from his pony; took off the saddle and bridle, and disposed it as a shelter for one side of his body.

Then, without a moment's hesitation, he drew his knife and drove it into the heart of the horse that had carried him so far, when the animal sunk on its knees and fell over on its side.

Then Herrendeen coolly laid out, on the edge of the wallow, the open pouch of ammunition that he had retained so far, almost unimpaired; laid his pistols beside it ready to snatch up; and prepared to defend himself against as many foes as might choose to come after him.

And he had not long to wait, for they soon began to come down, circling round him in regular cautious Indian style, protected by their horses and not exposing anything to be shot at.

At first they kept a cautious distance; but as the scout did not fire, they got bolder and circled in closer; trying to confuse him by sending bullet after bullet whistling as close as they could to him in his little fort.

He remained quiet till he saw that they were within easy distance when he fired a shot that brought down a horse and its rider together, in the style that he always affected.

He had a rifle that carried a very long distance and his cartridges were heavily loaded. The shot that, at a distance, would only have killed the horse; at two hundred yards went through the horse and hit the rider, at a point for which the marksman was compelled to depend on his judgment in aiming.

The sound of the shot was followed by an immediate rush to the breastwork; but a second bullet, taking two Indians in a line, and going through both, as they inadvertently rose in their saddles, eager to advance on what they thought an empty gun, sent them to the right-about again; but not soon enough to escape a third visitant, in the shape of a bullet, that sent another Indian to his long rest.

Herrendeen smiled as he muttered his usual formula:

"Never do to miss 'em at that distance, gentlemen. Never in the world."

With three shots he had laid low four of his foes; and the rest were circling round at a long distance, as if afraid to come any closer.

But the scout knew that this inaction would not last long. The very fact that he had killed or maimed four warriors was enough to insure him a close siege for the rest of the day, and the employment against him of every device that Indian warfare knows.

As he looked, they clustered together at a distance, and presently came down, all together, as if they had determined to overbear him by mere numbers, regardless of death.

He let them come within three hundred yards and then opened fire on them with a rapidity that amazed them.

One, two, three men dropped, but the rest came on at full speed and dashed at him; when he dropped his long rifle, and, crouching behind the shelter of the bank, opened fire with his revolvers as they came.

The bullets were hissing round him, and he felt the sting in more than one place; but as the Indians came, the horses swerved to either side, and the dauntless scout laughed aloud as he stood up and fired shot after shot at the Indians darting by him.

Once more they had thrown themselves over the sides of their ponies, and the charge had failed from the timidity of the first man, who had swerved to one side.

The rest had followed his lead instinctively, and the ponies had dashed by him, not quite daring to leap into the hole in which he stood.

He snatched up his rifle as the last man went by and sent another shot into the flying crowd, which brought down another man.

Then they fled a second time, and Herrendeen set to work to reload his empty pistols, muttering:

"Never do to miss 'em at that distance, gentlemen: never in the world."

A second time he saw them clustering at a distance, having carried off their dead and wounded with a reckless disregard of danger that was in strong contrast with their previous timidity.

A third time they came down at him; and this time he began to fire when they were a good five hundred yards off, dropping man after man, with a coolness and precision of aim that almost astonished himself.

All sense of danger seemed to have left him, and he took his aim as coolly as if firing at a target.

And this time the deadly nature of his fire appalled his foes so much that they swerved to one side, while yet a hundred yards away, and went circling round the wallow, firing as fast as they could, but with a poor aim that bred in him such contempt for their marksmanship that he actually stood up and yelled to them to "come on if they dared!"

But the third failure had disheartened them, as he had expected; and after they had swept by they declined to make any more attacks, but sat down on the prairie, at a long distance off, and began to make fires, with a great deal of smoke, signaling to their friends all round to come and help them against one man.

Then he saw that they had determined to run no more risks, and took his seat to rest a while, watching to see that none of them tried to steal in on him, but wishing for the night to come, when he might have a chance to get off.

The sun had already passed the zenith, and he had to wait all the afternoon, till the shades of evening advanced, when he saw another party of men coming toward him, whose red coats brought a thrill of thankfulness to his heart, as he recognized the mounted police whom he had seen in the fort.

There were only about twenty of them, but as they advanced the Indians clustered together to meet them, and he saw them apparently engaged in a friendly talk.

The talk over, one of the soldiers rode toward him, and as the man got closer he perceived the chevrons of a sergeant on his arms.

The sergeant came on slowly, and rode straight toward the buffalo-wallow.

When he had got within a hundred yards, the scout stood up and called out:

"Don't come no nearer, unless you're a friend. Hyar stand I, and I'd jest as lief shoot a British sojer as an Injun. What do you want with me?"

The sergeant called out in answer:

"Major Roberts sent me to ye to say you've got to surrender to us, or he can't save ye from the Injuns. If ye do, we'll take care of ye."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE MOUNTED POLICE.

NEVERMISS eyed the sergeant doubtfully.

"Thar's only twenty of you, and a hundred of the red-men. Haow am I to know ye kin take keer of me if I come aout? Ye don't know those cusses as I do. They won't furgive me in a hurry fur wipin' aout thar best men."

"The major told me to tell you that if you give up your arms he'll see you landed safely in the fort," was the answer. "We don't allow any fighting here but what we take a hand in it, and the Indians won't dare to fight us."

"I notice they fought ye this mornin'," retorted the scout. "Once fur all, send the red-men to thar own camp, and I'll come aout, and go with you; but I don't give up no arms long as they stay thar. Now, jest you git, Johnny Bull, or John Kanuck, whichever ye be. I don't want to hurt ye, but jest as sure as ye come another step I've got to plug ye."

And so saying, the dauntless scout raised his rifle and took aim at the soldier, who turned his horse and trotted off with a good deal more alacrity than he had ridden up.

Herrendeen saw him go up to the major, salute, and make his report, when there seemed to be some dispute going on between the soldiers and the Indians, which ended in the major taking one of the warriors by the collar, while the soldiers clustered round him, as if prepared to kill him if their orders were not obeyed.

The scout heard a good deal of high and excited talk, even at the distance at which he was, and then, somewhat to his surprise, the Indians rode sullenly away, while the same sergeant came down to see him again, and shouted, as soon as he was within speaking distance:

"The major says you're an imperient Yankee; but seein' you don't know no better, he's done what ye axed him. Now come out and give up your arms, or we shall have to come and take 'em."

Herrendeen pointed to his dead horse.

"I had to shoot him to keep the skunks off. Send me a hoss, and I'll come out; but I won't give up no arms to nobody till I git into the fort. If ye want to come and take 'em, this is as good a place to die as any I've seen round hyar, and I'm good for a dozen of you Johnny Bulls."

The sergeant shrugged his shoulders and rode off a second time, while the scout noticed that the Indians had clustered at a distance, and were watching the outcome of the affair.

Presently Major Roberts himself came riding up to the edge of the wallow, followed by one of the soldiers, leading a pony which had lost its rider in a skirmish.

As the major came up he seemed regardless of any danger, though the scout held his rifle ready to fire; but as he came to the edge of the wallow he said coldly:

"Here, my Yankee friend, we've had about enough trouble with you now. Get on this pony and come with us. There's a party of your people have just telegraphed us word that they are coming, and I'll give you a chance to get back to your own country."

Herrendeen nodded slightly as he said:

"All right, major. If you was in my place, you'd be as obstinate as I be. Let me change the saddle, and I'm with ye."

He deliberately unsaddled the Indian pony and transferred his own accouterments from the other horse before he would mount and go with the major. When he finally rode off, the officer said to him coldly:

"You've made us a good deal of trouble, you and that wife of yours. Do you know that the whole Sioux party came to the fort to demand her, and that if we don't give her up we expect to have to fight them and all the other Indians in this part of the Dominion?"

Herrendeen stared.

"D'y mean to say that they want her yet? Why, I thought that, bein' as she was a married woman, now, you folks would stand by her."

The major gave a sort of grunt.

"If it had been any other woman we might; but you don't know what you've done, young man."

"Well, what *hare* I done?" asked Herrendeen. "Seems to me thar's a good deal of mystery about my wife, and you fellers set a good deal of store on suthin' or other about her. Won't ye please tell me what it's all about? Why have I done anything wonderful in gittin' married to a gal that said yes to me?"

"Well, I'll tell you one thing you've done," the major said, as they rode along, side by side, at the head of the little party. "You've got Sitting Bull down on you like a thousand of brick, and he and his friends are going to give us a good deal of trouble, I'm afraid. You see we've got our Indians into pretty good control; but these men are beyond us yet. Our Indians have got old guns and poor ammunition, while these men have all the latest improvements, and we shall not be able to do anything with them till their ammunition runs out. After that we shall have them where we want them."

"How?" asked Herrendeen.

The officer smiled, as if the question were a simple one.

"We don't allow any traders in here with patent ammunition. When they get out of what they have brought with them, they'll have to trade their fine repeaters for old-fashioned muzzle-loaders, or go without. But I'm in hopes we may get rid of them before that, perhaps."

"How is that?" asked the scout again.

"Because there's a party of your people coming out to see them at the fort and make some proposition or other. They are to be here in the morning of the second day hence, and I've sent a courier to tell them that the country will be safe."

The scout brightened up at the news.

"D'y know who's comin', major?"

"Some general officer of your people; a man called Terry, I believe, and some other men with him for commissioners. They are coming, as I understand it, to ask Sitting Bull and his men if they would like to come back to Yankeeland; and it's my opinion they are going to be refused. It does not take much sense in an Indian to know when he is well off, and those Sioux have come here to stay—till after the winter."

The major grinned furtively as he said this, and Herrendeen asked him:

"What makes ye think they won't want to stay any longer than next winter, major?"

"Because they'll be frozen out," was the dry reply. "It's bad enough for our own men, who are used to it; but this country will not support any more than a certain number of men, and the coming of these strangers will crowd the Crees and Assiniboines out of their food. Then look out for squalls. You'll get Sitting Bull back before you want him, in my opinion."

Then he rode on silently, and the scout followed him over the plain in the fast-gathering shades of the evening, till the lights of the fort shone before them, when the major said:

"By-the-by, sir, you must not be surprised at not finding your wife here."

Herrendeen started violently.

"Why, what's come of her?"

"Her father, or rather her grandfather, Big Bear, sent her for her, and she has gone to his camp. I offered to keep her in the fort, but she said she preferred to go back to her own people where she would be free rather than remain in the fort where there are no ladies at present."

Herrendeen said nothing but:

"Then she wanted to go herself, sir?"

"Certainly she did. If she had not, as I said, I would have kept her, at any risk."

"Then, major," said the scout, resolutely, "the place whar *she* is, is the place whar *I* oughter be. If she's gone to see her dad, I'm goin' thar too."

Roberts appeared to be astounded at the idea.

"Why, man, you're mad; mad as a March hare! Your life would not be worth a shilling if the men that are after you got hold of you."

Herrendeen's only answer was to turn his pony to the east, asking:

"Which way is the Cree camp?"

"Straight the way you're pointing now," was the reply; "but you'll never get there alive. The Sioux are all over the country, and you'll be set on and scalped long before you can get within a mile of the camp."

Herrendeen looked at the western sky, where the red flush of sunset still lingered.

Far away on the other side of the heavens he could see the dusky glow that showed the presence of camp-fires and revealed the Indian tribe.

"Is that glow over yonder from the Crees or the Sioux?" he asked, quietly.

"That's the Cree camp, of course," said the major; "but look all round and see how the Sioux are spread over the prairie. You could never get through them, alive."

"If I waited till after dark and then struck from the fort, I could, though," replied the scout, quietly. "I ain't a fool, major, though you might think so. I know the risk well enough; but I know that no Sioux would go out arter dark if he thought thar was a chance of gittin' wiped out, and I don't propose to start till it's as dark as they make it. I kin git into the camp afore moonrise, and once thar, I'll trust to my wits to get into the guest-tepee safely."

"You might do that, indeed," said the major, like one who is compelled to admire another. "If you do it, you're a plucky fellow, that's all I can say, and I'll stand by you, as I wouldn't do, otherwise. But you shall come into the fort first, and get your horse fed."

"I'm agreeable to that, major, and to gittin' some grub into myself, too, for I hain't had a bite to-day sence sun-up. I'll go with yer."

They rode on into the fort which they reached half an hour after complete darkness had set in.

An hour later the scout rode out of the gate with no guide but the distant glow of the fire on the prairie, but mounted on his own horse, on which he had come to the dominion and which he found refreshed by a day's rest and food.

The sense of being on his favorite horse—for the animal had served him well for many a day—had its enlivening effect on the scout; and he took his course the more directly, that the horse, having been there, seemed to know the way.

Two hours' slow riding brought him in sight of a line of camp-fires with dark figures moving round them; and he cautiously approached them in hopes of discovering the position of the guest-tepee before he was discovered himself.

Once within its sacred precincts he would be safe from molestation, and with that idea in his head he took a wide circuit to view the camp.

He had to be cautious, for the stirring figures showed him that the camp was awake, and that he might be discovered at any moment.

But if the fact of the warriors being awake was a disadvantage, that of the fires being lighted was in his favor, and it was not long before he saw the white outline of the guest-tepee in full glare of the firelight, and noticed that a circle of warriors were squatted round it, as if some ceremony was going on.

Cautiously stealing round till he saw a place where the line was thinnest, he rode straight toward the camp; and as he approached it, set spurs to his pony, and rode at his utmost speed.

The warriors heard the patter of hoofs and sprung to their feet to see who was coming.

Herrendeen rode straight as an arrow toward them; but as they ran out to meet him he swerved from his course and entered the camp in the midst of a number of Crees, who recognized him by his dress, and shouted out to each other "not to kill him but to take him prisoner."

This was the one thing that he was resolved should not take place, and he galloped to and fro, evading all attempts to catch his bridle, till the whole camp was awake and buzzing like a hive of bees.

Then he suddenly made a straight line for the guest-tepee; dashed into the group that was squatted round it and leaped from his horse by the tent-door, catching hold of a post, just in time to escape a shot.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE COUNCIL DISTURBED.

THE scout knew that he was safe from danger of immediate violence as soon as he grasped the sacred post; but the faces of the Indians in the circle as he rode through them showed that they were angry with him, and when he saw that many of those present were Sioux, he understood the cause of their anger.

He had nearly ridden over one chief who was seated by the door and would not get out of the way; and when he leaped off his pony and caught hold of the post he was within five feet of this very chief.

Herrendeen had never seen Sitting Bull in his life; but he had often heard him described, and the way in which the chief looked at him made him think he had come on the redoubtable head of the Sioux confederacy; the more so that the next man in the circle was Riel, who regarded him with something between a smile and a

frown, that showed the half-breed was gratified at having the white hunter in his power at last, as he thought.

Herrendeen said not a word after he caught hold of the post, but stood erect, looking round on the Indians, and trying to comprehend the scene in which he found himself.

Most of the warriors and chiefs round him were Crees and Assiniboines, but the Sioux, marked from the rest by their different dresses, were there, also, to the number of twenty or thirty, and all seemed to be chiefs.

Big Bear and Poundmaker were inside the tent, seated on rugs of wolf-skin, smoking pipes, and neither of them evinced any sign of emotion as the daring scout made his dash into the midst of the council.

The only tokens of emotion displayed were by the Sioux and Riel, who looked discomposed and angry at the sudden irruption.

As Herrendeen looked round a little further, he perceived White Falcon seated by her father, but she gave no token of recognizing him and looked at the ground steadfastly.

A dead silence prevailed for a little while, after he had caught the post, and then Riel said in the Dakota tongue:

"We have spoken, Big Bear. The promise of the chief of the Crees has been given to the chief of the Dakotas, and we claim its fulfillment."

Big Bear answered him after the usual interval of dignified silence:

"Riel has no promise to claim, for we made none to him. If the Sitting Bull wishes to claim any promise let him speak out."

Then the scout saw the chief, who had remained seated when he had almost ridden over him, turn his face and demand:

"Is not the tongue of the red-man straight? I came to your country with my warriors, and you said that you would welcome me. I promised that my young men should go with you on the war-path, and that between us we would gain many scalps and drive the white man from the land. The Big Bear sent his daughter to my camp, and did we not treat her well? She beheld the fighting of the Sioux, and they struck their foes while she was there. Then she fled in the night from our camp, and since then we have had nothing but lies for our food. The Big Bear has promised that she should be given to me for a wife, and we have come here to demand that she be given up to us. Let Poundmaker answer, if our demand is not a just one?"

Herrendeen saw that he had blundered into the camp at an exciting moment, just as the fate of his own wife was to be settled by a council, to adjudge whether she should be given up to the Sitting Bull.

He looked round at Poundmaker, and the old chief answered:

"The Sitting Bull knows that all nations have their customs, and that they are different, the one from the other. The Sioux give their children to a stranger, and he gives to the father ponies and robes, as much as the girl is worth. In our country we do the same. But the White Falcon is not one of us or subject to our laws. She is the child of the great white mother that lives beyond the seas, and if we compel her to go to a place where she would not, the white mother will be angry with us. I have spoken. Let the Sitting Bull answer."

Sitting Bull answered at once:

"The white mother is far away, on the other side of the big water; but we are here, by the lodges of the Crees. The Big Bear has given his word that the White Falcon shall enter the lodge of the Sitting Bull, and it is just that he should keep the promise. Let Poundmaker answer that, if he can."

"I can answer that myself," interrupted the scout, interposing boldly, while the eyes of every man in the circle turned on him. "The White Falcon is my wife, and no man can take her from me."

Then he left the sacred post by which he was standing, and walked right through the midst of the tent to the side of Big Bear and White Falcon, who, for the first time, raised her eyes to his with a glance of recognition.

Then the daring scout took his stand by his wife, and continued, in the midst of a profound hush that fell over the tent:

"I speak not to the Sioux, for I have met them too often to fear them. I have sent warriors of theirs to the dark land, and expect to do it again. But I have no quarrel with the Crees. My hand has never struck one of them, and there is peace between us. I have no quarrel with the White Mother either. She and the Great Father of my country have been at peace for many a long year. But the Sioux, who come here to cheat you by trying to make you fight for them, are but cowards who have been driven out of their own land by the white men. Why should you help them against me? I met the White Falcon, and we went to the house of the black fathers, as you call it, up by the Lost Mountain. The black father married us together, and gave us the blessing of his Spirit upon it. Who is this Sitting Bull, that he should come here and try to rob me of my wife? She is mine; and if he wants her, let him not ask Big

Bear or Poundmaker, but me. I will know what answer to give him."

So saying he turned on Riel and the Sioux chief, with his rifle lying carelessly over his arm and with his right hand resting on the butt of a pistol in his belt.

This bold address, as he had expected, produced a profound sensation in the tent; and when he had finished, no one answered him till he said:

"Are the men of the Sioux dumb, that they cannot speak? I say that White Falcon is my wife, and that Sitting Bull shall not have her."

Thus directly challenged, the Sioux chief turned his glowing eyes on the daring scout, and his voice seemed to come from the depths of a cavern as he said:

"The Cree chief has heard the stranger. Let him choose now. He sees the thief that stole my wife from me. That thief must be given up to me, that my young men may punish him as he ought to be punished."

His words were listened to in silence, till Herrendeen, looking round, saw that the Crees who were present looked uneasy and downcast, while Poundmaker was puffing his pipe placidly, as if the matter was no concern of his.

The scout turned to the Stone chief.

"What says Poundmaker?" he demanded, in a peremptory manner. "Shall the men of the Crees and their allies be frightened by the words of this boaster from the South? Let them choose between the White Mother and the Sioux; between the men who have given them presents all these years and the man who comes to a great chief empty-handed and asks for his daughter, when he cannot give as much as a pony for her."

Here Riel jumped to his feet excitedly, crying:

"Let the man be given to us for torture! He has insulted us all and must die."

Herrendeen instantly retorted:

"Let Riel come and kill me himself, if he dare. I have fought him once, and conquered him with my bare hands. If the Sioux want my wife, they must fight for her. I have spoken."

The words were hardly out of his mouth when the half-breed chief snatched a pistol from his belt, and in another moment half a dozen Crees had leaped on him and torn the weapon from his grasp.

Big Bear rose at once, and in a loud voice pronounced the council broken up, adding:

"Let the Sioux and Riel come again when they can behave like warriors in council; and in the mean time White Falcon belongs to her father."

His words were followed by an instant scattering of the Sioux from the tent, and they ran out into the camp, jumped on their horses and rode away, yelling all sorts of things to each other, but not firing a shot, though it seemed for a few moments as if the council would break up in a free fight.

The scout retained his place by White Falcon and her father all the time, and when the tent had been cleared he saw, from the expression on the face of Big Bear, that the chief was more than half-pleased that the council had been broken up in the way it had, leaving the question unsettled.

Poundmaker came to the young man and said to him in a low voice:

"They will come again; but we cannot afford to fight them unless we are sure that the soldiers are with us, and then the men of Batouche will not join in the fight."

"But you will have to pay for White Falcon if you expect to keep her for your wife. If Sitting Bull comes and offers a thousand ponies, there will be no way by which we can put him off forever."

Big Bear nodded confidentially as he heard his friend speak, and added:

"If you can offer more than the Sioux chief, we can say to the tribe that White Falcon is not given away for nothing. How many ponies can you raise?"

The question took Herrendeen aback, for he had never thought that his property in his wife would be disputed after a marriage in the church. But he said rather doubtfully:

"I ain't a rich man, but if it's necessary to git a thousand ponies to pay fur White Falcon, I'll try what I kin do to raise the money."

Then he added, reflectively:

"If a thousand ponies is all that's wanted to git the gal, why didn't ye tell me that afore? I thought ye'd given her up to the Sioux for nothin' at all, and wondered why ye did it."

Big Bear smiled rather ruefully.

"The Sioux have many guns of the new pattern, and we none. If we force them to fight us we shall have to lose many men before we beat them, and the end is uncertain. We have to keep peace with them till we are sure that the men of Batouche will not join them, but us. In the mean time you are safe within this camp; but the moment you leave it you are in danger. If we can get the men of Batouche, from the strangers, to our side, we can afford to laugh at the Sioux; but till then we are in danger of having all our horses stolen, and our game driven away from us."

The old chief spoke kindly enough, and there was that in his expression that showed the scout that he was well impressed with the idea of having him for a son-in-law: but he was plainly uneasy at what the Sioux might do, and anxious not to decide the question at once.

The young scout thought a little, and at last said to his *quasi* father-in-law:

"Why could you not send White Falcon away for awhile, so that the Sioux might think no one had her? I will stay here and show myself to them constantly, so that they may know I am not with her, and in that way you may have peace. I hear, too, that there are men coming from the South, to the fort, to ask them to go back to their own country, and you may get rid of them in that way."

The old chief seemed to be struck with the idea, for he eagerly asked all about the news Herrendeen had heard at the fort that day, and concluded by saying:

"If we can get rid of them we shall be all the happier. But if Riel persuades them, they will not go. He is as much trouble as they are."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE PEACE COMMISSION.

The prairie round Fort Garry was as green as ever, and the flowers spangled it with more than their usual brilliancy, when a strong *corps* of horsemen, with a train of wagons, came winding its way along, like a gigantic serpent, toward the fort, coming from the South, two days after the council in the Cree camp.

The blue uniform of some soldiers who came with it, and the presence of several fluttering guidons, striped with white and red, with a blue patch in one corner powdered with stars, showed that the whole cavalcade belonged to Uncle Sam.

Out of the fort to meet them came a little troop of scarlet-clad lancers, headed by Major Roberts; and as the two bodies met, there was a good deal of hand-shaking and civil talk between the major and a gentleman whose silver star, on the strap of his undress blouse, showed him to be a general officer of the American army.

As the cavalcade neared the fort, a great encampment appeared behind the square, and the general asked his host:

"Are those the Sioux? There is a much greater force than I thought there was."

Roberts shook his head.

"Oh no. If those were all Sioux, we should have a hard time with them, for they are the most troublesome brutes I ever came across. But when we put them in the midst of the Crees and Assiniboines, and keep them away from those half-breed devils at Batouche, we can manage them. Less than a quarter of that camp is made of fugitives from your side, and we are quite willing to send them all back to you as soon as you want them. We don't want to fight them till we get ready, or we should have turned them out long ago. But we have to do a good deal of managing, with as little fighting as possible. When it is necessary to fight, however, we can do it as well as your people."

He ushered them into the fort, and they found a large hall in the central building, which was used for a barrack, spread with tables, at which the Americans were hospitably entertained, the soldiers from the South fraternizing with those of the North most happily.

When dinner was over, the major told them that the Sioux chiefs had been invited to meet them in the marquee, pitched in the square; and they were warned to speak conciliatingly, if they hoped to get the savages back.

"Though, for my part," said the major, "I don't see what you want of them. We should be very glad if they would leave us, and go back to you, I can assure you."

They went to the great marquee, which had been spread with carpets and decorated with flags, on purpose to make an impression; the Indians being fond of finery.

Here the American officers, dressed in uniform, with the civilians of the commission in black, were seated on chairs, provided with pipes, and told to keep grave and silent, after which the Indians they had come to see were introduced at the other door of the tent.

They came in with long strides, and the haughtiest expression they could assume, in all the finery that they could muster to dress in, and took their seats by themselves on the other side of the broad carpet, that served as a line of demarcation between the Indians and the American strangers.

The American general looked at them with great interest as they came in, for there were many there that he had never seen before, and only knew by reputation.

Especially was every one curious to see the great Sitting Bull, and it was observable that they exchanged glances of disappointment with each other when they saw him come in; for he had none of the ferocity of appearance that they had expected, and looked like anything in the world but a great warrior, as he took his seat, clad in a calico shirt, a dark blanket and plain black leggings.

Then the council opened, by the Americans producing a number of presents, which were handed to the Indians.

They were things that an Indian covets; but it seemed, on this occasion, as if they had entered into an agreement with each other to express no surprise or thankfulness for anything they might get.

Mirrors, beads, knives, hatchets, bright blankets, shirts, coats, everything that they needed was there; but they gazed stolidly at them, and if one deigned a grunt of approval at times, he was sure to be frowned on by the rest.

At last the chief commissioner opened the talk, by telling Sitting Bull how much the Great Father loved his red children, and how sorry he was that they had gone away from him. He made no allusion to the fight they had with Custer, though he had come there on purpose to hear what they could about the mystery which surrounded the death of the gallant chief of the Seventh Cavalry.

When he had fin'ished his talk and asked them to come back, Major Roberts interpreted the words to the Indians, who pretended that they could not talk a word of English, though many there understood it perfectly.

Then came a short silence, and the American party looked at the Indians to see who of them would answer.

And first arose a wrinkled warrior, called Standing Bull, who spoke out:

"We lived in the land of the South for many years. When I was a boy there were no white men there, but my people hunted where they had need, and they were happy. The white men came when I was a young man, and asked for food, and we gave it to them. Then they went on again, and we thought no more were coming. After that came more, and they all wanted something. And we gave till we were tired of giving, and at last they began to come and live near us. They drove away the buffalo, and we began to starve. Then we had to fight them at last, and since I grew to be a man I took many of their scalps. But in all the fights we had, the white men struck me first. Now we have come to a land where we can live in peace. We do not want to fight any one. We want to live in peace, and we can do that in the land of the White Mother, who lets us stay in peace, as our fathers did."

The sentiments of the speaker seemed to give universal satisfaction, from the chorus of grunts that followed the speech, and the American general was asked what else he had to say, in case the Indians consented to go back to his side of the line. What could he promise them?

He made a long speech, in which he said, once more, a good deal about the love of the Great Father for his red children; but reminded them that they had been disobedient, and had killed many of the Great Father's white children. He told them that if they consented to come across the border they must give up their arms and all their ponies, and that the Great Father would take care of them, and give them food and all sorts of things, with which they could learn farming, and live quietly like their white neighbors. Then he asked to hear from all their head men what they thought of the idea.

A famous warrior called the Elk was put up for the first speaker on the Indian side, after the general had finished, while Sitting Bull sat on his wolf-skin rug, smoking his pipe with an impenetrable placidity of countenance, that showed not a sign of the interest he really felt in the conversation.

The Elk was a handsome Indian, though quite an old warrior; and he spoke with a good deal of graceful gesticulation, like most of his race.

"We have come to the land of the White Mother," he told them, "to be at peace. In the South, the land is poisoned with blood, and the buffalo have left the country. When I was a boy no man could count them, and now there is not one buffalo to be found, where once they hid the grass from sight. The white men have driven them away, and we have followed them here, where there are some left. The white men of the South have sent men to us to ask us to come back. We do not want to go back, and we want them to go where they came from. We want them to go back easy, and not be in a hurry to return. We have our horses and our rifles, and we want to keep them. Let the white men go back and leave us alone. That is what I say."

Another chorus of grunts, and he sat down. He was followed by several other Indians, who all spoke to the same effect; but Sitting Bull remained quietly seated and took no apparent interest in the conversation, till the American commissioner suggested that he be asked to reply, in the name of his people.

The request was translated to him and he rose and made a speech in which he followed the lines of the previous speakers, saying:

"The Great Father who dwells in the South has sent to ask us to come back. Why should we go back? I used to dwell in peace with the white men and I never asked them favors. When I was a young man, some of my warriors stole some American horses, and I gave them back to the people they had taken them from; but it did no good. They kept on coming into

my land till I was driven from my country, and had to fight. I have fought the white men often and never yet did his soldiers beat me. My warriors have taken many of their scalps, and now they come to me and ask me to give up my rifles, that are mine, that I bought and paid for; to give up my horses, and to trust to the white man to take care of me and my people. Why should I trust another to take care of me, when I can take care of myself? We have come to the land of the White Mother, and we have found her people to be good. Why should we leave good people to go to bad ones?"

"We will not go back. We will stay where we are, as long as the White Mother treats us as well as she treats us now. If she drives us out, and we have to go back, we will die fighting, for that is better than to die like deer or dogs, shot down without a chance to revenge the blow we receive. Let the white men go back, and never return. We are not children, to be fooled with lies; and the Americans are all liars."

This time the chorus of grunts was emphatic, and the Indians in the circle glared at the commissioners as if they would like nothing better than to get a chance for a free fight.

The general rose and signified that the council was at an end; and the Indians filed out of the tent, making no salutations as they went, while the major said to the general:

"I was afraid you wouldn't get anything out of them. The fact is, they haven't gone through a winter yet, and they don't know what our winters are. Next year you will find them easier to deal with, or I am much mistaken."

So the great expedition, from which so much was hoped, ended in disappointment, and the members prepared to take their way homeward in disgust, while the demeanor of the English officers prescinded a curious mixture of pride in the fact that the Sioux had preferred to stay under the British flag, and embarrassment at the prospect of having to control such a number of troublesome customers for another year, at least.

It was while the American general was standing on the ramparts of the fort, looking down at the great encampment below him, talking to the major, that he perceived a disturbance among the Indians, and a good deal of riding to and fro, which finally developed itself into the spectacle of a man on a swift pony, who was galloping as hard as he could toward the gate of the fort, while a number of Indians were in full cry after him, trying to catch his horse and yelling:

"What is that?" asked the general.

Major Roberts frowned with an expression of ill-temper, as he said:

"That is one of your troublesome men from the States. He is trying to get into the fort and the Sioux are trying to prevent him. They would kill him, but for the fact that they have given their word to me that they will not fire a shot while your expedition is here, unless your men fire first."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE RETURN.

The sight of the single white man trying to get to the gate of the fort, and the efforts of the Indians to catch him on the road, brought a crowd of men to the ramparts; but even the strangers were not long in doubt as to the persons who were after him.

The lodges of the Crees and Assiniboines were of different shape from those of the Sioux, and the Indians of those tribes could be seen standing at the doors of their tepees, looking on at the contest with impartial coolness, while the pursuers of the fugitive were all of the Southern Indians.

The white man seemed to have an excellent horse, and to be a good horseman, from the way in which he evaded the capture that seemed at first inevitable.

He was fully armed, but did not attempt to use his rifle or pistols, while the Indians who followed him had left their arms behind, and carried nothing but their whips, with which they struck at him whenever they got near enough.

When they could not get a chance at the man they attacked the horse, trying to drive it away from the gate, while the efforts of the white rider seemed to be confined to getting near the gate and beating off his opponents by parrying the blows of their whips with the barrel of his long rifle.

Every now and then he would turn in his saddle, when an Indian came too near and tried to grasp him by the clothing.

Whenever this happened, he made a crack with the heavy rifle at the pursuer, and tumbled him out of his saddle with a blow from the butt of the long gun. And from the ramparts one could see that, whenever he did such a thing, the Indian struck down never dared to come back to the attack, while more than one lay stunned where the blow had stretched him.

Still, such an imposing force of Sioux was gathered before the gate that it seemed impossible that he could ever get into the fort; and the American general, on the rampart, asked Roberts:

"Why won't they let him come in?"

Roberts shrugged his shoulders.

"Probably they are afraid he will tell you of something you ought to know, and don't want him to get back to the Crees, after all. He is safe in the camp of all the Indians except yours."

"And who is he?" asked the general, with much interest. "Do you know him?"

The major considered a moment.

"Yes; I've heard his name. Let me see; something like Herndon. Says he was a scout for your side in that Custer fight."

"Not George Herrendean, the scout they call Nevermiss?" asked the general, with vivacity. "If that's the man I should like to see him above all things. Can't you induce them to let him in?"

The major colored slightly as he replied:

"Well, the fact is, general, we have not so much control over these new Indians as we might desire, and have to let them take a good deal of liberty in non-essentials to preserve our influence in essentials. If he manages to get in he is safe; but if I were to go out and try to help him, they would regard that as an infraction of the agreement. But look! I verily think the fellow is going to make a charge."

As they looked round they saw the daring scout, a few hundred yards from where he had beaten off his nearest foes by sweeping blows of his gun, coming straight down toward the gate as hard as his pony could run, the reins loose on the neck of the animal, while the rider was holding his long rifle in both hands over one shoulder, like a base-ball bat.

The Indians in front of the gate urged their horses to meet him, waving their whips, and in another moment the two parties met.

The general uttered a cry of admiration and surprise as he saw the single white man dash through the midst of the Indians, the long gun waving in circles above his head, and in another moment he had passed through them, leaving two warriors prostrate on the ground, and had entered the gate of the fort, amid the cheers of the soldiers who had witnessed thefeat.

"Plucky fellow, by Jove!" was the major's comment, as he hurried down to the gate with the general.

A few minutes later the scout was shaking hands with the general, and saying:

"I told you I'd get hyar, gin'ral, and hyar I be. I've got a heap of things to say to ye, and not much time to say 'em; for I've got to git back to camp to take keer of my wife."

The general seemed to be surprised at the news, for he ejaculated:

"Your wife? Who is she?"

Herrendean glanced at the major, and the latter took the hint and retired, leaving the general alone with the scout, who began his story, and told all about his adventures in the land of the White Mother. What transpired between him and the general was not public; but when the interview ended, the general said aloud, before Major Roberts, whom he beckoned up to them:

"Major, I have been trying to persuade this man to return with us to the States; but he has expressed his wish to remain here to watch for our interests. Have you any objection to giving him a pass to go where he will in the dominion as long as he enters into no difficulties with the Indians?"

The major shook his head.

"No pass that I could give him would be of the slightest avail. He will have to take care of himself, the same as the rest. If he wants protection, there is just one way he can get it."

"And what is that?" asked the general.

"If he wants to enlist in my companies here, and join the mounted police, the Indians will not dare to hurt him, but to do that he must give up his allegiance to the United States, and take the oath to the queen."

The scout laughed.

"That's a thing I won't never do, major," he said. "I was born under the Stars and Stripes, and I hope to die under them. I hain't got nothen to say ag'in' the queen, but our folks didn't cotton to her granddad, as I've h'ard, and I ain't one as goes back on my folks. I'll have to take my chances in the future, as I've done in the past."

Then, turning to the general, he continued:

"Sence ye don't want to do what I axed ye, that's only one way to do. I've got to go back."

He went to where he had left his horse as he spoke, and was preparing to mount, when the major earnestly exclaimed:

"Don't go out now, while they are all excited. Stay in the fort till night, or, better still, till after the Americans have gone. They will get you sure this time. Look outside and see how they are waiting for you."

In fact, by looking out, they could see that a number of Indians of the confederated tribes were strung out in a circle round the gate, standing by their horses as if they expected the scout would try to return the way he came, and there were at least three hundred warriors in the circle, ready with their whips to drive him back.

But Herrendean only smiled at the sight, and mounted his horse to ride out in spite of the remonstrances of the general and major.

"Thar's only one way to deal with them red cusses," he said, "and that is to show 'em you don't fear 'em for a cent. As long as they hain't nothen but whips, I can stand a deal of that and git to the tepee afore they kill me."

With that, out he rode at full speed, and the rush was the signal for every Indian in the circle to leap on his horse to meet him, yelling ferociously.

For a moment the waving of whips in the air and the sound of the whistling lashes made such a confusion that it was impossible to see what was taking place.

Then rose from the camp a great counter-yelling, and another body of Indians was seen running to meet the first.

Their ponies were at their utmost speed, and their whips waving over their heads.

The scout in the midst of the Sioux was faring badly, for they had almost overpowered him by numbers, when this new force of Indians came down into the midst of the struggle.

Then Major Roberts laughed aloud as he said to the general, who was watching the scene with much interest:

"Even Indians have a notion of fair play, you see. They think that five hundred against one isn't fair odds, and they are going to help the white man."

So it seemed; for there rose a great tumult in the camp as the second body of Indians met the first, and in another moment the Crees and the Sioux were engaged in a violent struggle with their whips, out of the midst of which they saw the scout dart at full speed and vanish in the distant parts of the camp followed by a mob of Indians, who seemed to be fighting together whether one side should strike at him, or the other at them.

The tumult subsided as quickly as it had begun, and the major observed:

"That settles it, I think, general."

"What settles it?"

"The fact that the Crees have helped the stranger from the South. They have let him alone, hitherto; but since they have identified themselves with his cause, there is but one thing for them to do now, and that is to adopt him into their tribe and make an Indian of him. He has won the battle by sheer pluck, I believe."

So it turned out, for they heard no more disturbance in the camp for the rest of the day, and when the American embassy departed, which it did next morning, the interpreters, who had been in the Sioux camp during the night, told them that there was going to be a grand council between the Crees and the allies next day at which was to be settled whether the white man should be admitted into the Cree nation by adoption, or given up to the Sioux for torture.

The departure of the embassy at any other time would have produced a great deal of curiosity in the camp and brought out a great crowd, with some trouble for the soldiers to keep the Sioux from attacking their hated foes; but on this occasion the interest seemed to be turned from them by the daring exploit of the scout, who had run the gauntlet of the Indians into the fort, and escaped in such an unlooked-for manner.

Not an Indian came out to see the Americans depart, and as the general took leave of his escort, late that day at the frontier, he was impressed with the words used by Major Roberts, who told him:

"General, that scout you call Nevermiss has more pluck than any man I ever saw. I would not like to be in his place to-day, for a million sterling. It's just a toss-up whether they kill him or make him a chief, with the chances in favor of killing him, to please these Sioux who want everything they can lay their hands on, and a good deal more too."

Then he turned and rode slowly off in the direction of the fort. The last seen of the great Northwest by the American embassy, was the little troop of red-coated soldiers filing off over the green plain, going back into the midst of the Indians.

As the general crossed the frontier, he said to one of the officers of his escort:

"It is a hard thing that we could do nothing for that poor fellow. Think of him, all alone in the midst of those savages! If they conclude to kill him—"

A shudder showed how he feared that they would; but his friend could only answer:

"We must hope for the best, general. If pluck and skill will save a man, he will pull through."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE BURNING QUESTION.

WHEN Major Roberts arrived at the fort, after having escorted the embassy to the frontier, he found the whole camp in a great state of excitement, while the sun was setting and fires were burning in front of the council tepee, which had been erected for the purpose of members from both tribes meeting there, in case of differences arising between them and the strangers from the South.

An embassy from Poundmaker and Big Bear was watching the trail of the soldiers, as they came up and brought an invitation from the chiefs to the white officer to be present and in-

terfere, if necessary, on behalf of the "White Mother," as they all called the British Government.

The major was tired after his long ride to the frontier and back, but he said he would come, and soon after rode into the camp with an officer or two as a show of authority, though he had taken precautions against violence that some of the Indians little dreamed of.

In the first place, when the council tepee was erected he had insisted that it should be put up close under one side of the fort; and on this side, unknown to the Sioux (though the Crees were better informed) were ranged five Gatling guns, mounted on the top of a stockade whence they could rake the whole building at a given signal.

The Crees were supposed to be safe to stand by the soldiers, while Poundmaker was well known to be jealous of the strangers, who were given to hunting all over the country and scar-ing away more buffalo than they killed.

When the major arrived at the council tepee he found that Big Bear and Poundmaker were there with the chief men of the Crees and Assiniboines, but the Sioux had not made their appearance.

He asked after the white hunter, and was told that he was a "prisoner in the camp, under charge of the Crees."

This looked ominous at the very beginning, but the major made no remark and took his seat till the tepee gradually filled with Indians, the strangers coming last.

All greeted the major with cordiality, for they had seen that he was their friend against the Americans, as they thought, and they liked him for that.

When Sitting Bull at last came in, there was a formal smoking of the pipe of peace, which was passed from hand to hand with the ordinary ceremony.

Then the strangers opened the conference by the question from Sitting Bull:

"Has the Big Bear concluded to keep his promise or not? We have come to ask that question."

The major had not heard of the promise in direct terms, but he understood what was the subject of discussion, and looked at Big Bear to see what answer he would give.

The Cree chief said nothing for some time, but at last turned his head to the strangers and gave the counter question:

"What promise do you mean?"

Sitting Bull curled his lip as he replied:

"The man that talks straight knows what he has said, and will not go back from it. The Big Bear promised that there should be a strict alliance between our people, and that it might be close, he told me that he would give me the girl they call White Falcon for a wife."

Big Bear puffed a volume of smoke from his pipe and said curtly:

"White Falcon is not mine to give."

"Is she not your daughter?" asked the Sioux, in a tone that showed rising anger. "In my tribe we do not ask our daughters whom they wish to marry, but we tell them they must do as we wish, and that is an end of the matter."

"The Crees are different from the Sioux," was the politic answer. "We cannot force our girls, for we are all the children of the White Mother, and she has sent word to us that the maidens must choose for themselves, so long as their choice is approved by their parents."

"Then the girl is mine," replied the Sioux, in a triumphant manner. "You have approved her choice of me for a husband, and she has nothing to do but to come to my lodge."

"But White Falcon is the child of a great chief, and must be paid for," said Big Bear.

The Sioux smiled as if the argument was a poor one, as he retorted:

"Name the price for the girl, and it shall be paid; but the girl must come to my lodge."

Big Bear looked at Poundmaker and then at the major, and drew a long breath as he said:

"Her price is a thousand ponies and as many rifles as can be loaded on ten of them."

Sitting Bull nodded.

"The price is small. It shall be paid," he said.

Then turning to one of the Indians in his suite he said carelessly:

"Let the ponies be sent to the tepee of the Big Bear, with the rifles, and let the girl be brought to our lodge."

Big Bear looked at the major and Poundmaker again, in an imploring way, as if he saw no way of getting out of his promise, and the Englishman interposed quietly:

"The Big Bear is giving what he has no power to give. The girl is not his daughter at all."

The Sioux chiefs stared at him silently; but Sitting Bull was the only one to speak.

"Then whose daughter is she?"

The major cleared his throat as if for a speech.

"Many years ago, when I was a boy, the White Mother had a son, who was a great chief, and who came from the lands beyond the sea, from her dominions, to see with his own

eyes what he had only heard of before. He traveled through the lands of the South, and the men of the South bid him welcome. Then he came to this land, and went among the red children of the White Mother, to see what they were like. It was a long time ago, and the Crees in those days were a great tribe, who had never yielded to the White Mother. And when the young chief from the country beyond the sea came to visit them they made a covenant with him, that if he would marry the daughter of their chief, his child should be chief of the Crees, whether it be a boy or girl, and that they would come under the rule of the White Mother, and render her obedience."

Here he paused, and Sitting Bull inquired, in a sarcastic manner:

"And what said the young chief from the country beyond the sea? The white men are not proud of wedding red women."

The major nodded.

"The Sitting Bull is right. The young chief did not like to do it; but it was a choice for him whether the Crees would kill him, or adopt him as their chief, and marry him to their chief's daughter. He had come to them, and they had him in their power. He consented to marry the child of Big Bear, and White Falcon is the child of that marriage. No man can marry her without the will of the great White Mother being heard in the matter."

The Sioux chief was nonplussed for the first time by the statement that had been made to him. In truth, the legend that the Prince of Wales, when on his visit to America, many years before, had taken to himself an Indian wife, to please the savages of the Northwest, had been floating about on the plains outside of the Canadian dominion; but had never been brought down to actual facts. The Sioux had no occasion to disbelieve it, and his face fell as he said:

"But the White Mother will not say nay. The Sioux are a great nation, and they are her friends. I have heard how, many years ago, the people of the South were under the dominion of the White Mother's people, and we can help her to put them back where they belong. Our men are all warriors, and can help the soldiers of the White Mother. Let White Falcon be given to me, and she shall be chief over a great nation, and we will ride with the warriors of the White Mother to fight with the men of the South. I have spoken."

The major could hardly avoid a laugh at the way in which the proposition was put, but he kept his face, saying:

"The White Mother is at peace with the men of the South, and does not wish to fight. They have more men than she has, and are like the blades of grass on the prairie for numbers. We do not wish to fight the men of the South. If the time comes when we do, we will call on the Sioux to help us; but it has not come yet."

Then he added:

"Besides, it has been told me that the White Falcon has taken to herself a husband, and she cannot marry you while he is alive."

The Sioux nodded carelessly.

"That is right. But when the man is killed we shall have nothing to fight about and the White Falcon can marry me."

The sentiment seemed to meet the approval of the Sioux, for they all grunted assent, and the chief added:

"Let the White Mother be asked about the girl, since we do not wish to go against her; but, in the mean time, let the man that stole her, without asking leave, be brought to us and given up to the torture. He, at least, is ours."

Major Roberts looked round the circle and saw that the demand pleased the Sioux, while the Crees looked doubtful and disposed to yield. To gain time, he asked:

"Where is White Falcon?"

Poundmaker answered, at a signal from his friend:

"She is in the camp, and has said that she would not come to the council unless it was agreed that she should not be given to the Sitting Bull for a wife."

The wily Sioux answered eagerly:

"That is agreed already. Let her come to the council. I have said that I will not press my demand till the White Mother has been heard from. But the man is another thing. Let her come and show if she can why he should not be given up to us."

Poundmaker nodded.

"That is just. Let her be sent for."

At a sign from Big Bear an Indian left the tepee, and a silence ensued while they were waiting for the coming of the girl who wielded such an influence over them on account of her illustrious parentage.

After a short delay White Falcon entered the tepee and looked round her at the Sioux with an air of disdain as she asked:

"Why are the strangers here? I went to their camp as a friend, and they compelled me to flee from them in the night. I have said that I will not become the wife of the Sitting Bull, and if he tries to force me I shall appeal to the White Mother for protection."

Sitting Bull smiled at her in his blandest way as he answered:

"The chief in the red coat has told me, and I have consented to await the answer of the White Mother, whether she will give her consent. But now we are talking about the man that stole you away and pretends that he has made you his wife. He has broken the laws of the White Mother and red-man alike, and must be given up to us."

The girl looked at him in a way different from the one she had hitherto used. She seemed surprised and alarmed at what he said, and her voice shook a little as she answered:

"The man has done no harm. He is my husband, and if he dies, I die with him."

Sitting Bull turned to Big Bear.

"Let the chief speak. This is no question of a girl, but of a man who has slain my best warriors in the land of the White Mother, where we should have peace. Shall not the man be given up to us to deal with as we please?"

Big Bear looked at the major, and the officer answered at once:

"The White Mother does not allow tortures for any of her children, and especially when the man who is to be tortured belongs to the men of the South, who might ask him from her."

"If the man has done wrong, there is but one who can punish. That is the White Mother, and she will do justice."

And he looked calmly at the angry Sioux.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SHOWING HIS CLAWS.

SITTING BULL and his chiefs glared at the quiet officer who made this statement as if they could hardly contain their rage, and the chief demanded with a sneer:

"And suppose we choose to take him, who shall prevent us?"

The major saw that an explosion was very likely to occur at any moment, and he gathered his limbs together for a spring, while an uneasy movement was noticeable among the Crees, who knew what might be expected if a fight began.

"If you wish to take the man and kill him," said the officer, quietly, "you will break the laws of the White Mother, and she will be angry."

Sitting Bull snapped his fingers.

"The White Mother is a long way off, but we are here," he said, defiantly. "We are going to have the man or the girl. She is here, and he is not. Let him be brought, or we will take the girl."

The major rose to his feet slowly, and as he did so, the Crees began to creep out of the tent in all directions.

The Sioux, suspicious of the sudden movement, leaped to their feet, and a conflict seemed inevitable, when White Falcon threw herself between her father and the excited Sioux, and cried:

"Let the man go out and fight the best of your warriors. If he is conquered, let him die, and I will become the wife of the Sioux chief. If he conquers the best man the Sioux can send against him, he shall be adopted into the tribe of the Crees, and none shall harm him. I have spoken."

Her words produced a lull in hostilities, and, as she had anticipated, several warriors of the Sioux were heard eagerly demanding the honor of fighting the stranger at once, to settle the dispute.

Sitting Bull alone seemed doubtful, and would not give his consent to making a thing dependent on a battle, when they had it in their own hands already.

They were still disputing when the major, in a voice raised to a high key to attract attention, called out:

"Let the Sioux beware what they do. If I leave this tent, it will need no fighting of men to quell them, but every man left here will be slain, as if by thunder from heaven."

He stood at the door as he spoke, and had taken from his pocket a whistle of silver, which he held in his hand, ready to put to his lips.

The Sioux started at his words; but not believing that he meant what he said, laughed derisively, when the major raised the whistle to his lips, and blew a long blast, stepping back at the same moment from the tent, from which every Cree had fled.

The next moment came the growl and rattle of a Gatling gun over the camp, and a storm of bullets tore through the top of the tent, plowing a hole in the ground close to the amazed Sioux, who instantly fled in disorder from the tepee, tumbling over each other in their haste, while the rain of bullets continued till the sharp whistle of the major caused it to cease as suddenly as it had begun.

Even Sitting Bull was taken aback by the mysterious way in which the punishment had come, and as he stood outside the tepee, and saw the fire that flamed from the muzzle of the gun on the rampart, he imbibed an idea of the power of the red-coated soldiers that he had never felt before.

Then Major Roberts went back into the tent, saying to the amazed Sioux:

"You see, if I wished, I could have killed you all like dogs, without a chance to defend

yourselves. Hereafter let the words of the White Mother be respected by her children, for she can punish as well as reward."

The Crees had been watching him closely, and as he went back into the tent they came after him, while the humbled Sioux took their seats in the circle, very much quieter than they had been before, and disposed to listen to reason.

White Falcon and the two chiefs returned, and Roberts, seeing that his wild guests were in a mood to obey orders at last, said aloud, when all had taken their seats:

"Now let the council go on. Let the white hunter be brought before us, and remember that the man who raises his hand against him may be struck by the lightning."

There seemed to be no more disposition on the part of the Sioux to rebel, and a Cree was sent to fetch Herrendeen, who soon after made his appearance, a prisoner, and disarmed.

The young man was rather pale, for he felt helpless in his novel position, the first time that he had faced his foes without a weapon in his hands. He had been bound securely, and was carried in on a rude stretcher.

When the Sioux saw him in this condition, their savage temper was nearly breaking out; but Sitting Bull restrained the rest with one glance, for he had seen too much of the power of the major to wish to defy it needlessly.

White Falcon, looking pale as she beheld the light of her lover, came in with Big Bear and Poundmaker, and the council proceeded quietly.

The Sioux accused Herrendeen of having killed their warriors in time of peace in the country of the White Mother, for whose honor they had become suddenly very anxious, and demanded that he be punished for stealing the girl he pretended to have married.

Then the major ordered the prisoner to be released, for he told them that, by the laws of the White Mother, no man could be called on to answer for his life in bonds.

The young hunter was released, set in the midst of the circle, and questioned what he had to say for himself why he should not be given up to the Sioux for punishment.

He had had an intimation before he was sent for that there would be some trouble in pacifying the Sioux on his account, and had spoken with Big Bear on the subject.

Therefore he was ready for the question, and answered boldly:

"I have committed no crime. I came to the land of the White Mother in peace, and before I had been here an hour, I was followed by a man called Riel, who tried to shoot me without any warning.

"I did not even fire back, for I knew it was against the laws. I fled to the house of the Black Fathers, that dwell by the lake, and on my way there I met White Falcon.

"We fled, but the man Riel and his friends pursued us, till we were compelled at last to defend ourselves. Then we were married. White Falcon and myself, by the father, and if there is any crime in that, I am ready to answer it to the White Mother, but not to these men, who are strangers in the land."

The major, who had now become judge, here asked:

"Are you willing to fight for your wife with a warrior selected by the Sioux, and to give her up to Sitting Bull if you are beaten in the contest?"

The hunter had had no previous intimation of the test that was to be demanded, and he cast a glance round the tent, which finally rested on his wife before he answered it. Then he said, slowly and deliberately:

"My wife is *mine*, and I haven't a right to put her to risk in the matter. If Sitting Bull wants to fight me for her, I'm willing to try him any way he pleases, but he'll have to kill me before I give up my wife."

The Sioux listened to him silently, and the major said:

"You have spoken well. The Sitting Bull is no warrior to fight; but he has men that will do the fighting for him. White Falcon herself has made the proposition, and the council has determined that, if you can beat his champion, he shall give her up. Are you willing to try what you can do?"

The scout glanced at White Falcon, and the girl nodded her head silently.

He seemed to throw off all doubt at that look and said boldly:

"I am ready. Who is the man that is to fight for Sitting Bull?"

The major looked at the Sioux chief, and the latter, without hesitation, said:

"Let Rain-in-the-Face fight for his nation. The man that slew the Long Hair will take the scalp of this man; and I will hang it over my lodge when I take my wife there."

He had a confident smile on his face as he spoke, and the major looked round, the tepee, asking the Indians:

"Is Rain-in-the-Face here?"

There was no answer till Sitting Bull said:

"He is not here. He is not a chief. He is a man who is young in council but old in fighting. I will send for him, and he shall fight the stran-

ger in the morning. In the mean time there is peace between us."

And so saying he rose to his feet and held out his hand to the young hunter.

For a moment Herrendeen was too much astonished to take it; but the expression of the renowned chief was so bland that he obeyed the invitation, and the Sioux grasped his hand warmly, saying:

"You are a man. If all the men of the South were like you, we should never have fought. It is a pity that you should be killed for a mere woman. Give her up and you shall be my son, and ride with us."

The scout shook the hand extended just as warmly as the other, saying:

"If all the Indians were like you, Sitting Bull, we should never have got as far as we have on the plains. You're a good fighter, and so is this Rain-in-the-Face, as I've heard. But as for joining your band, I've another word to say to you about that."

Then he held the hand, smiling in the face of the chief, and continued:

"You're a good man for an Indian, Sitting Bull, but you haven't the first idea of what you're doing when you undertake to fight Uncle Sam, as we call him. I'm going to whip your man, Rain-in-the-Face, to-morrow, and the best thing you can do, after that, is to promise me that you will take a trip with me to the East, and see what sort of people the whites are. When you have you won't want to fight them any more."

The chief allowed a slight, contemptuous smile to cross his face.

"I have heard a good deal about the power of the whites; but I never saw the time when I had not more men than they have. If they have so many men as people say, why do they not bring them against us, as soldiers?"

The scout laughed, as he answered:

"Because they don't think it worth while. Why, Sitting Bull, do you know that if you were to take your whole nation and put it down in the midst of one of our towns, no one would notice them there, for the numbers of the white people? You did a foolish thing when you said you'd stay here. You'll freeze to death and starve to death in the winter, and then what is to become of you? I'll tell you what I'll do with you. If I kill this Rain-in-the-Face, I want you to promise me that you'll come East, some day, and see for yourself all the power of the white folks. Will you promise that?"

Sitting Bull eyed him with a singular expression, as he said:

"If you kill Rain-in-the-Face I will go to the East some day, but not with you. But you will not kill Rain-in-the-Face. He is the man who killed the Long Hair; and who are you, to fight such a man as that?"

Herrendeen flushed slightly.

"Perhaps you're right, chief," he said. "It isn't well to boast before the battle is over. But I have your promise, and you have mine. If I'm killed you'll get a wife. If I kill your man, you'll get something else you need worse, and that is *sense*."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE TRIAL BY BATTLE.

THE next morning rose bright and fair, and the whole of the vast camp of the confederated Indians was early astir, as the light struck the tops of the hills, that could be seen, far to the west.

Herrendeen had been set at liberty, and had actually made friends with the Sioux chiefs and warriors, for they seemed to be quite willing to be friends, now that they were going to have their own way.

They seemed to trust to the prowess of Rain-in-the-Face as the greatest warrior in the world, and told the scout that he would never get a chance to strike a blow once the other got in front of him.

Yet Herrendeen had not seen Rain-in-the-Face in the camp, and only knew him from having seen him run from the Gatling gun on the day that he had defied Major Roberts in front of the fort gate.

The young hunter knew that all this boastful talk about his coming antagonist was meant to shake his nerves, and made light of it to himself. When they told him that the redoubtable warrior had "killed the Long Hair" he laughed at them, and told them that "no man could tell who killed the Long Hair, in a battle such as had taken place at the river side."

But for all that he made light of it he could not help a certain sense of anxiety as to the issue of the coming contest, the more so when he reflected that there was no issue, to him, but the death of himself or that of his foe. And a man setting out deliberately to a fight that he knows must be to the death, is apt to be solemn over it, when the same man would face the chances of battle gayly.

When the morning of battle came the scout was given his arms and horse, while a large body of Indians went outside the camp, in high glee at the idea of seeing a contest like that which was about to take place.

Herrendeen had been kept alone since his surrender to the Crees and had not been allowed to

see White Falcon; but Big Bear came to visit him, early in the morning, and told him, in secret, that the sympathy of the Crees was with him, and that they hoped he would kill Rain-in-the-Face, for they were tired of the way the Sioux tried to lord it over them on account of their superior arms.

At last the time had come, and the young hunter rode out of the camp, surrounded by Crees, to the place designated for the fight, which was in full view from the fort gate and commanded by a pair of Gatling guns that frowned above the ramparts.

The major of the Mounted Police had taken care to maintain his prestige among the Indians, and there was no way so sure as keeping them under the influence of those terrible machine-guns which they dreaded so much.

The spot selected was surrounded by a vast circle of Indians of all the tribes in the camp; and, thanks to the precautions of the major, the chiefs had made their men come to the sight without their arms. It was thought too dangerous to trust arms in their hands when such a heavy stake depended on the issue of the fight, and when the strange Indians were so excitable and savage.

The appearance of Herrendeen, as he rode into the midst of the circle, mounted on his bay pony, was the signal for a buzz of interest, and the British Indians gave him a few yells of approval, the Sioux maintaining a dignified silence. The scout looked round him for his antagonist, but saw no one there, and Big Bear and Poundmaker, who had accompanied him into the arena, called out in their own language a challenge to the Sioux to produce their man.

Then came a distant burst of yelling from the rear of the camp, in the direction where the Sioux had their tepees, and a small party of Indians, gayly dressed, was seen coming at full speed straight toward the arena.

The yelling from the Sioux grew louder and louder as the horsemen advanced, and it burst into a perfect shriek of joy as Sitting Bull, Tall Bull, Standing Bull and Iron Horn, all bedecked with plumes and streamers of red ribbon, dashed into the arena, escorting a tall and lithe young Indian, who sat his bare-backed pony with only a loin-cloth to hide his bronzed body, while his hair was full of streamers of the same narrow ribbon with which the chiefs had ornamented themselves, which flew out behind him, as he rode, like the tail of a comet.

His face was handsome and smiling, his long hair plaited in two tails on either side, and he bore in his hands, or about him, a repeating rifle, a pair of pistols, a lance, bow and arrows, with a long knife stuck in his belt.

A perfect arsenal of weapons he looked, fit to fight for a nation, and the Crees were not backward in signifying their approval.

There was an unexpected hitch, however, at this stage of the proceedings. Big Bear, who acted as a sort of godfather to the scout, insisted that the arms of both parties should be made equal, and that, inasmuch as the scout had a breech-loader, while the Sioux champion had a repeater, they should both leave their rifles and trust to pistols and knives alone.

Rain-in-the-Face took no part in the dispute, leaving it all to his chiefs, and they decided at last, after an appearance of hesitation, that the pistols should be used, and the rifles be laid aside.

Sitting Bull might not have consented to this so willingly, but he had heard that the scout was a dead-shot with the rifle, and that the Indian prided himself on the skill he could show on horseback with the pistol.

The two champions were therefore reduced to an equality in weapons, placed at opposite sides of the arena, and a silence fell over the assembly as they waited for the signal to advance.

Herrendeen sat erect on his pony, with a revolver grasped in one hand, the reins in the other, eying his enemy keenly.

Rain-in-the-Face was crouched over in his saddle, staring at the other, the smile still on his face, as careless as ever; but a hungry look in his eyes showed how his handsome face might deceive in its expression.

Big Bear, Poundmaker, Major Roberts and Sitting Bull made a group a little to one side of the center of the open space, and the major gave the signal for the assault by waving a handkerchief in the air.

Then both men raced at each other like arrows from a bow in swiftness.

The chiefs galloped out of the line of the fire, and Rain-in-the-Face, as he neared the hunter, began to fire his first pistol, for he had one in either hand.

The scout sat erect in his saddle, and every time a flash came, he threw his body first to one side, then the other; the horse swerving as he did it, the rider not returning a shot.

As they drew near, Rain-in-the-Face had sent every shot in his first pistol and was changing to the next when Herrendeen, who had now got quite close to him, tired.

The Indian saw the flash, and threw himself on the side of his horse, dashing by unhurt, and at the same moment he engaged his left arm in the loops thrown over his saddle, came up under his horse's neck and sent a shot at the hunter.

The aim was taken instantaneously, but the distance was so short that another miss was an impossibility for a man who could shoot at all.

The bullet grazed Herrendeen's shoulder, and drew the blood with a sharp sting, and the same moment the scout turned his pony right on that of the Indian, and fired shot after shot, right down at the rider, grasping the rein of the pony as he did it.

It seemed almost impossible that shots fired at such a short distance should miss, but the bystanders saw the Indian shooting up at the white man, and the white man shooting down at the Indian, shot after shot, till both revolvers were empty, and when the smoke cleared away the two ponies were still together, and Herrendeen was getting out his second pistol, while Rain-in-the-Face was writhing up to grasp him.

The fact was that the motions of both animals had been so irregular and confused, that even the aim of the hunter had failed him, and he had not hurt the Indian seriously, his shots having grazed or struck the pony, while those of Rain-in-the-Face had been equally futile.

The next moment both men were locked in a grapple on the horses, tugging at each other to get the mastery, and Rain-in-the-Face was trying to draw his knife.

The struggle lasted for a few seconds, and then the white hunter threw off the grasp of the Indian, and Rain-in-the-Face wheeled round and fled; Herrendeen pursuing.

The Indian was looking back over his shoulder, and the white man had got out his pistol at last.

They saw him fire one shot, and Rain-in-the-Face dropped from his pony, which instantly stopped by its master.

A mournful wail went up from the Sioux as they saw the fate of their champion, and the Crees raised a wild yell of triumph.

Herrendeen pulled up his pony, and leaped off to approach the Indian.

The next moment the Crees stopped yelling, while the Sioux raised another cry, this time of delighted surprise, as Rain-in-the-Face, that all had thought severely wounded, if not dead, leaped up behind his pony, and held it as a shield between himself and his foe.

Herrendeen leveled his pistol at once and fired at the pony, which dropped on the earth, the rider dropping behind the body.

Now the yelling ceased from both parties, for the situation was critical. Herrendeen had only three more shots, the Indian none; but they could see that Rain-in-the-Face had his knife poised in one hand and his hatchet in the other, and none knew how seriously he had been wounded, if at all, so confused had been the skirmish.

He had his head raised, and was looking at the hunter, who raised his pistol and fired his next shot with deliberate aim.

Rain-in-the-Face dropped instantly; but they saw him raise his head again and eye the hunter stealthily, his knife still poised in his hand.

He had dodged the shot which had been fired at his head, and they could see the feather that it had cut from his hair floating away on the wind over the grass.

Herrendeen walked round so as to get a better view of the Indian, where he could not be sheltered by the body of the horse, and as he walked Rain-in-the-Face slipped round to the other side of the pony, never exposing a safe shot.

Herrendeen raised the pistol a second time and fired a second and third shot.

The gazers saw Rain-in-the-Face dodge the first, as he had done before, but as he raised himself from it, the second sped, and though he fell again, he did not rise, but lay there in a way that showed he had been hit severely at last, if not killed.

Then they saw the hunter draw his knife in his turn and rush in, when the Indian rose to his feet, and the two men became engaged in a deadly struggle, where the flash of the blades was seen in the sunshine as they cut and stabbed at each other.

Rain-in-the-Face did not show the activity he had exhibited at the beginning of the fight, and they saw him fall back again and again, the scout pressing him close.

Now both parties yelled their best to encourage their respective champions, and the Indian seemed to be excited by the noise from the way he fought, resuming much of his pristine activity, while Herrendeen rushed after him with an eagerness that savored of rashness.

"It's anybody's fight yet," muttered the major, who was watching the fight with the coolness of a veteran observer.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE JUDGMENT.

As the major said, it was "anybody's fight" yet.

The hunter, while a better shot than his antagonist, had met a man who was perfect in every wile and stratagem of Indian-fighting. Rain-in-the-Face had only been grazed before the last shot, and although that had gone through his neck and down into his body near the collar-bone, making a wound that would

have prostrated a white man instantly, the tenacity of life of the Indian warrior, due to perfect health, gave him strength to rise and renew the fight with an activity that was amazing.

A desperately-wounded Indian is proverbially more dangerous than one who has a chance to escape, and Rain-in-the-Face was no exception to the rule.

His whole thought was intent on revenge at the cost of his life, and he made no effort to parry the blows of the white man's knife, thinking only of giving back stab for stab.

In this way he managed to cut the scout twice, though each cut cost him a stab that would have prostrated any other man; and when he fell at last, Herrendeen was bleeding from more than one wound and staggering with weakness.

But he knew that he had to kill the Indian or be killed himself, and he went over to his fallen foe, while the dead silence that reigned in the circle showed the intensity of interest taken by all in the scene.

Rain-in-the-Face was lying with his eyes half-closed, unable to rise; but he saw his foe as he came, and making a desperate effort, he cast his knife at Herrendeen, and laughed as he saw the point strike the scout full in the breast.

The next moment Nevermiss, with an angry frown, was on him, stabbing with a fierce energy that showed he felt it was his only chance for victory.

Then the major and the Cree chief, riding up to the combatants, found Herrendeen lying on the body of his foe, who was stone-dead with the white man's knife in his heart, while the hunter looked as if he was nearly spied too.

The Sioux chiefs, after a glance at the body of their slain comrade, turned their horses and rode silently away, while Big Bear leaped from his pony and raised the scout in his arms.

Nevermiss turned his face to the chief and gave a faint smile as he said:

"Well, chief, how did I do for ye?"

He spoke English, which Big Bear did not understand; but the chief made out what he meant from the tone of inquiry, and answered at once:

"You have done well for us. Are you hurt much?"

The scout raised himself slowly with the help of the chief's arm, and stood on his feet. As he did so, the knife which Rain-in-the-Face had thrown at him dropped from his breast, and Big Bear saw that it had penetrated but an inch into the center of the breast, sticking in the breast-bone, while the cuts that Herrendeen had suffered in the duel had not wounded him seriously.

The scout looked round him for a few moments, as if trying to collect his thoughts, and then said slowly:

"I believe I'm better off than I thought I was. Where is Sitting Bull?"

The Cree chief pointed to the sullen mass of Sioux, who were riding off, and Herrendeen said:

"Please send for him; I want to say a word to him."

Big Bear nodded to an Indian, who galloped off after the Sioux, and soon returned with the great chief of the confederacy, who looked as if he had resolved to suppress all sign of any emotion he might feel at the disappointment of his hopes.

He looked coldly on the scout, who asked him:

"Well, Sitting Bull, was it a fair fight or not?"

The Sioux chief bowed his head gravely.

"You are a warrior, second to none. Rain-in-the-Face was a good man, but you are a better. He staked his scalp, and lost it."

Herrendeen pointed to the body.

"Is that the man that killed the Long Hair?" he asked.

The Sioux chief bowed his head.

"Rain-in-the-Face struck him last."

"Then why did he not take his scalp?" asked the scout, eying the chief steadily.

Sitting Bull shook his head gravely.

"We did not want his scalp. He was a brave man, and never struck us in the dark. Rain-in-the-Face might have taken it, but he would not. I have said he was a man."

"Then neither will I take his scalp," replied the hunter, gravely. "Rain-in-the-Face was a man, and he met me fairly. The body is yours, to do with as you will."

The savage chief seemed surprised, and showed it, for the first time since Herrendeen had seen him, for he said:

"The scalp is yours. It was a fair fight, and you won it. The arms and body are yours. No Sioux will dispute the right."

"But if I choose to give it up, will the Sioux accept the gift?" asked Herrendeen.

The chief hesitated for a long time, and at last, when he spoke, the words seemed to be drawn from him, in spite of himself.

"If we had killed you we should have taken your scalp and dried it in our tepees."

"But I do not wish to take the scalp of Rain-in-the-Face," replied Herrendeen. "If he had taken the scalp of the Long Hair I might have

done it, but a white man cannot do what an Indian is ashamed to do. The body is yours, but the White Falcon is mine, and you have no more part in her. Take your warrior and give him the funeral of a brave man."

Then he walked to his pony, which was standing by him, bleeding from several wounds, but not mortally hurt, and slowly mounted it, leaving the Sioux standing round the body of their champion, as if stunned at the unexpected generosity of their foe.

Herrendeen was weak from loss of blood, and could hardly sit his horse steadily on his way to the camp; but he revived under the ministrations of the Crees, who came to the tepee they had assigned to him, and bound up his wounds with herbs that had been gathered by their medicine-men, and under the influence of which the scout fell asleep, and did not wake till the sun was sloping to the west, and the camp sunk in quiet, that contrasted greatly with its late noise and confusion.

He rose on his elbow and looked round, to see White Falcon seated by the foot of the rude couch on which they had laid him.

Over his head were the poles and hide covers of an Indian tepee, and the iron pot hung from the center, while skins were piled all round to lie on. His weapons were hung up, like those of a chief, and a handsome Indian saddle was at the foot of his couch.

As he opened his eyes, White Falcon smiled at him and said:

"Your probation is over. My people have accepted you as a chief, and you will be initiated as soon as your wounds have healed."

"And you, White Falcon?" he asked, "how is it with you? You sent me away from you to my own country, and told me you would not be my wife in aught but name till I had made a name as great as that of any warrior in your tribe. How is it now with you?"

She smiled back at him as she said:

"The name is made. You have slain the man that took the life of the Long Hair, and he was the greatest warrior of the South. Hereafter no woman need be ashamed to be called your wife."

The scout rose eagerly and tried to stand, but his limbs refused to support him, and he sunk back on his couch, saying with a sigh:

"I thought I'd be a happy man when ye said that, White Falcon; but I'm no more good. A babbie might run away from me now. Whar's the folks in camp?"

"They have gone out with the Sioux on a great hunt, to celebrate the making of peace; and there are none but the women and children left," she told him. "You must rest as much as you can, and in a day or two you will be as well as ever. They have had a grand funeral for Rain-in-the-Face, and his body has been taken away. Our only foe has come too late to do any harm."

"And who is that?" he asked, for he saw from her manner that it was something of which he had no knowledge."

"Louis Riel," she replied, with a scornful glance. "He came posting into the camp after the thing was settled, and tried to make the Sitting Bull break his word and claim me in spite of his promise. But the Sioux chief was a better man than he, and would not lie."

Herrendeen stirred uneasily on his couch.

"Has he gone with them on the hunt? I have a kind of sense that the man will be dangerous to us, White Falcon, till we or he conquers, as it was with Sitting Bull. Where is he now?"

"He went with the rest on the hunt, and seemed to have yielded to fate," she said. "Fear not, my husband; for you have won your wife fairly, and Riel cannot alter the decision in which all the rest agree."

Then she smoothed his forehead, and sat by him to sing him to sleep again. The soothing tone of her voice, her soft touch, the weakness produced by his wounds, all united to make the young hunter drowsy, and he fell into a doze, from which he waked with a start to find the tepee dark, night having fallen, while a red light shone in through the half-open door, to show that he was alone.

This time he felt refreshed enough to rise, and after a little to stand on his feet, holding on to the poles of the tent.

He saw an Indian lance leaning against the tent, and took it to use for a support, with which he slowly walked from the tepee and took his post in the doorway looking out.

The encampment was dark and silent, the few fires that were burning being at some distance off, while the figures moving about them were those of women and children.

He could see no signs of White Falcon; but as he slowly stepped forth from the tepee he was aware of the low rumble that told of approaching horsemen coming toward the camp from the prairie.

Thinking the hunting party was coming back he peered out into the darkness, and saw, by the faint light of the stars, dark figures coming rapidly toward the camp, like horsemen at speed. The squaws at the fires had caught the same sound, for they were looking round in the same direction, and the children were running

from the lodges, as if curious to see who was coming so fast at such an hour.

Presently the figure of his wife made its appearance among the rest, and it was coming toward his tent.

The thunder of hoofs grew louder and louder momentarily, and the women raised a shrill yell of welcome to the returning hunters.

Then Herrendeen saw the advancing figures more plainly, and noticed that they had not the feathers and head-gear that belong to Indians—but *fur caps*.

As he realized this, they came sweeping into the camp in a burst like a hurricane, and he saw that they were a band of some thirty or forty half-breeds, with Louis Riel at their head. With the memory of the hatred the half-breed had always shown him, of his own defenseless condition, and that of his wife, Herrendeen hastily fell back into his tepee, and snatched up his rifle with trembling hands, though he could hardly lift it for weakness.

As he did so he heard a wild shriek outside, and in that moment forgot his weakness, and ran out, holding the rifle cocked before him.

Within a hundred yards of the tepee was a dark mass of horsemen, and in the midst, borne aloft on a horse, was a struggling figure in the arms of the half-breed chief, in whom the hunter recognized White Falcon.

She was screaming wildly for help, and the squaws were shrieking with her, and calling out all sorts of threats: but in vain.

Then Herrendeen raised his rifle with a hand that trembled with excitement, and fired at the half-breed chief.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE LOST BRIDE.

The rifle flashed and the bullet sped, but the scout could not see in the darkness whether his shot had taken effect.

The report was followed by a yell of fury from the half-breeds, and down they swept at full speed on the place where he stood at the door of the tent holding the smoking rifle in his hand, and forgetting his weakness in his excitement as he threw out the cartridge and put in a fresh one.

He was sensible of the figure of Riel sweeping past, holding the figure of White Falcon in front of his saddle, and then he was firing his pistols right in the faces of the half-breeds, as they galloped past his tent, firing as they went, in the same style as the Indians.

Then they were gone; and Herrendeen, all his strength vanishing as the excitement went with it, sunk down by the door of the tepee, feeling a deadly weakness stealing over him, and thinking that he must have been hit again, though he could feel no pain.

But the camp sunk into quiet as the gallop of the half-breed's ponies died away in the distance; and then the squaws began to come to him, as he lay there at the door of the tent, and wail aloud their grief and despair at what had happened.

He managed to find out from them that Riel and his men had gone out with the hunters in the morning, and that when they had been seen coming in at night they were supposed to be only the advance messengers to tell of a prosperous hunt.

White Falcon had seen them coming, but had expressed no fear till Riel had dashed up to her where she stood, and stooping from his saddle had lifted her to his own by main force, he being a man of tremendous physical strength.

The rest Herrendeen had seen for himself, and as the squaws had brought torches, they found by the door of the tent more than one streak of blood on the ground, showing that his pistol-shots had taken effect on some one or other, though no one could tell whom.

But, after they had told him all they knew, he realized that they could give him no help and that he was too weak to help himself.

For the first time in his life the bold hunter, who had defied all sorts of dangers and overcome all odds, was compelled to wait for others to help him.

And when they would come no one knew; for the hunt on which they had departed was one in which they expected to go for a day's journey out into the northern prairie, to get a drive of buffalo in a distant trap, made by the order of Poundmaker, several years before.

Unable to rest, and yet unable to pursue, the young hunter was compelled to waste the long night in thinking over the possible fate of his wife, in the power of a man who hated him bitterly.

Would Louis Riel dare to hurt her? was the question with him; and he could not settle it in his own mind.

Had White Falcon been taken by the Sioux, he would have had no doubt on the point; but the Canadian half-breeds were different, and he knew that Riel and his companions at Batouche were in a great measure dependent on their Indian neighbors for so many things that he hardly thought they would dare to openly defy them, to the extent of harming the sacred person of her who had been called the "child of

the White Mother," and the head "Princess of the Crees."

The more he thought on the subject the more the hunter became convinced that the half-breed had stolen White Falcon for the purpose of holding her as a hostage; and the reason for this was not far to seek, knowing what he did of the ultimate projects of Riel.

He knew that the half-breed chief was set on gaining the independence of his people from the British crown in some way, and that he had been encouraged in his designs by parties in the United States, who thought that, in such a rebellion as Riel was likely to set up, they might find their own profit.

Indian traders and squaw men, dealers in arms and furs, cattle-men and squatters, were alike interested in seeing Riel conduct a rebellion, and equally likely to leave him in the lurch if he had bad luck; while the presence of the Sioux, who had lately come in, was an additional incentive to Riel to strike quickly.

Herrendeen realized that the half-breed, who had seen all his plans foiled so often, must have stolen White Falcon as a means of making terms with the Sioux and enticing them into the alliance that he coveted.

Whatever might be the truth about the matter, he had nothing to do but to wait; and hard work it was for the active-brained hunter to wait, that night, till the light of day revealed the prairie as green as ever, and showed him a few scouts coming toward the camp; this time from the hunters in reality.

It was a token of the complete concord that had been established between the Southern Indians and those from the Dominion that the coming scouts were Sioux and Crees indiscriminately, while they were headed by Iron Horn, brother of the very Rain-in-the-Face who had been killed by Herrendeen the day before, and who expressed himself most loudly in indignation at the outrage that had been perpetrated by Riel on the white hunter.

"This half-breed would cast dirt on the Sioux," exclaimed Iron Horn, angrily. "Does he think that we are no better than white men to break our word when it has been given after a battle?"

He sent off runners at full speed to inform the hunters of what had occurred; and while they were gone Herrendeen ate some food and was so far recovered in strength that he was able to mount a horse by the time the whole body of the Indians came tearing back to the camp, which they did in great excitement at the news brought them by the runners.

The Crees and the Sioux were equally excited at the news, and before the tribes had been in the camp for half an hour, a war-party of five hundred men had been raised, composed equally of Northern and Southern Indians, who were all eager to follow after the half-breeds, and recover the princess they had stolen.

There was no difficulty anticipated in finding her; for the half-breeds were known to have their head-quarters in Batouche, which was sixty-five miles, in an air-line, from Fort Garry and the camp.

Sitting Bull was among the men who had volunteered from the Sioux to go after the stolen girl; and he rode by the side of Herrendeen, as the white hunter came out of camp.

The face of the Sioux chief was impenetrable behind its usual bland mask of smiles, and he spoke little during the first part of the journey, which was made at the amble of the war-party, on the trail.

The way by which the thieves had gone was as plain as a well-traveled road, no effort having been made to conceal it; and sixty of the sixty-five miles that separated the Cree camp from Batouche was traversed before sunset, the horses of the party being fresh taken from the herd.

Herrendeen, in his weak state from loss of blood, was the only incumbrance on the speed of the warriors; and they went slower than they might otherwise have gone on his account.

When night came, they went into camp; Big Bear and Poundmaker being in command, Sitting Bull in the same group, where they sat, as they held a council over the evening fire.

It was decided not to attempt an attack on the village of Batouche in the night, for the half-breeds were well-known to be brave and obstinate, well-armed and skillful at making the defense of every house in their village a matter of death to the assailants.

Herrendeen, when he reached the camp, was too tired and downcast to take any part in the council; but he was able to eat food; after which he lay down on the grass and listened to the discussion going on between the old chiefs as to the proper way to make Riel give up the girl to her tribe.

Big Bear was grave and solemn. He seemed to be much cast down at the public insult he had received in the abduction of his granddaughter; and it was this, rather than the fear of her absolute loss, that seemed to rule his thoughts, for he said when he opened the council:

"Riel has cast dirt on our tribe; and the half-breeds will laugh at the Crees if they are not punished for it. What says Poundmaker?"

Poundmaker reflected a little before he gave his opinion, and when he spoke, it was with slow deliberation.

"Riel is angry because we will not go against the White Mother, and he has stolen her child to show that he hates her. We should go to the red-coat chiefs before we do anything. Riel is afraid of them, though he pretends he is not."

Then he turned to Sitting Bull, and said:

"What says the chief from the South? Should we do well to fight against the White Mother, or not? We are alone in the great plains, and she is a long way off."

Sitting Bull allowed a smile to cross his face as he answered:

"Your White Mother, as far as I have seen, treats all her children alike. You have never yet had any fight with her. But she is not as great as the Great Father in the South, and I have fought him again and again, as you all know. But what avail has it been to me? If I could have avoided it, I would have done so; but I had to fight. And to what has it brought me in the end? Here you see me, with my people, who once ruled all the land by the big river. We have not a foot we can call our own now; and we are come to live on the charity of the White Mother and our red brothers in the North. If you will take my advice, you will think a long time before you think of fighting the White Mother."

Big Bear nodded as if the ideas pleased him. Then he looked cautiously, and seeing that there were no Indians near to listen, he said in a low voice:

"We are alone now, and can speak plainly. We have all seen the white men. Poundmaker, tell the Sioux chief how you know about them, and he will see that we are not fools."

Poundmaker eyed the Sioux sharply as if he suspected the wisdom of speaking; but as Sitting Bull looked as blandly smiling as ever, he said:

"I was brought up among the white men, in their towns, and know what we are going to fight, if we fight at last. The white people have more people in one of their towns than we have on all of our prairies, and they have more guns in their houses than we ever saw."

"It would be the worst folly to talk of fighting them, unless we had the white men of the South to help us. But we are against all white men, and hate one set as bad as the other."

"Therefore there is no end for us, when the white men want our land, which they will do, sooner or later, but to die fighting for them like the wolf and the panther. We are like them. We live in the wild country, and we hate the sight of a white man. We flee from before his face and only ask to be left alone."

"As long as we are alone, we are happy. When he comes, we must go. The longer we can keep him away, the longer shall we keep off the time when we all must die. I have spoken. Riel must be made to give up the girl; and there must be no fight for her as long as we can keep it off."

Sitting Bull listened, and his dark face was graver and more thoughtful than usual as he said, in a way that showed how he had taken in all Poundmaker had said:

"I have heard a good deal about the white men being so many, but I have never seen the time when I have not had as many soldiers as they have. If ever the time comes when I must yield to them, I should like to go among these towns you speak of and see, with my own eyes, the wonders of which you have spoken."

Big Bear shrugged his shoulders.

"I have been there, too. But I do not think so much of the white people as Poundmaker does. He says right that they have a good many men, but they do not fight. They have soldiers to do the fighting for them, and the rest of the men work to keep the soldiers. They do not know and do not care what we do on the plains. Some day when you go among them, you will find that they do nothing but ask questions about things that everybody knows. They are wise in some things, but foolish in others. Take one of them, and set him down here, and he would be lost in the grass. He would starve for want of eyes to see the game on every side."

Poundmaker smiled, as he retorted:

"Yes, and take one of our men, and put him into the midst of the white towns, and he would be starved unless they chose to give him food. They ask questions about us, because they have never seen any of us. But we have never seen anything of them, and they are going to kill us all in the end, if we do not learn their ways."

The old chief heaved a sigh as he said this, and Sitting Bull, who had been listening intently, said reflectively:

"There have been times when I have doubted if I might not have done well, had I done as some of my people have done—go and see the wonders of the white man. But I have hated him so badly that I have thought it would be abandoning my people if I did so. I have seen chiefs who have been to the East, and they have come back telling of wonders of all sorts. And my people have said of them that they are liars, because they told them of these things. Yet some of them have I seen with my own eyes. The white men have carriages that run by fire, and

boats that go on the river by fire, and they talk on wires. All these have I seen. But all these things there is plenty of time to see, if I have to go back to the South. In the mean time, the White Mother has been good to me, and I will not fight against her till she does badly."

As he finished he looked at Herrendeen, and the scout said:

"That is right, chief. You have given your word to the White Mother, and a warrior never breaks his word."

Sitting Bull nodded.

"You have said more truth than you think, white hunter. Sitting Bull never breaks his word, and some day you will see that."

Then he wrapped himself up in his blanket and lay down by the fire, and it was not long before the camp was in sleep, save the sentries that lay outside to watch for the half-breeds, should they venture on an attack.

CHAPTER XXX.

IN THE BLOCK-HOUSE.

THE village of Batouche resembled a fortress on the night when the Indians lay outside, waiting for the dawn.

The houses, at any time, with their heavy log frames, the loopholes under the eaves, and their strong barred doors, looked as if meant to resist attack; but at the moment when the Indians lay outside, the whole village had been put into a posture of defense more formidable than usual.

Several houses had been abandoned by their owners, and the whole male force of the half-breeds was gathered in a large block-house at the outskirts of the village, on a knoll which commanded a view of the whole.

This block-house was a long low building of heavy squared logs, banked up with earth on the outside; the roof of heavy timbers covered with earth, as a protection against fire, while the only sign of danger visible from the outside was the row of black loopholes that grinned from under the eaves, at the top of the smooth grassy mound that hid the timbers from sight. Such a building, well manned, would require the aid of artillery to reduce it; and in the hall which occupied the center was gathered the whole force of the half-breeds.

Big sturdy fellows they were, for the most part, descended from the hardy *voyageurs* and Hudson's Bay factors, who had been the only white men seen in the country till within a few years. Not a dwarf among them, and not a weakling. The completeness of physical health was in every well-knit figure; and it was only when one looked at the faces that one realized their inferiority to civilized men.

Almost all, without exception, had faces either savage or stupid to the last degree; and there was a general impress of barbarism on the whole assemblage which made Louis Riel a king among them, for he had a keen, energetic face, and looked as if he had been born a leader among them by divine right of intellect.

Among white men he would have looked a savage; among savages, he looked a king.

There was a fire burning in the center of the block-house, the smoke escaping from a large hole in the top of the roof, though much of it hung around on the floor, and made the atmosphere thick and murky.

His followers, to the number of some hundred or more, were gathered round him, and every man had his rifle by him, while his belt contained all the weapons of other sorts he could muster.

There were very few revolvers among them, and those of the old pattern which loads with loose powder, while the rifles were all of the muzzle-loading kind; but the men who handled the weapons were of the hardest and most self-reliant kind, and looked as if they would be tough customers in a fight.

In the midst of this savage assemblage was White Falcon, as she had been stolen from the camp of the Crees, and she looked as if she had not been ill-used, for she was unfettered, and the half-breeds even treated her with respect when they had occasion to address her.

But she had no arms, and her fanciful Indian costume in which she had always been seen hitherto had been replaced by a coarse peasant dress such as the women of the half-breeds wear in the house, much the same as that of French peasantry, with some Indian features.

But they had removed the plumed head-dress which she had always worn as a token of her chieftainship among the tribes, and there was nothing about her appearance to show that she was recognized as anything but a woman of the same estimation in which all women are held among the savages of the West.

She looked sad and downcast as she sat there on a log in the midst of the assemblage, which was engaged in discussing her fate.

Louis Riel had called all his men together as soon as he had brought White Falcon into the village, and had consigned the girl herself to his wife, who had, by his orders, dressed her as she was now attired.

Now he had brought her before the whole village, to tell them why he had brought her there, and what he intended to do with her.

The only malcontent in the party, if one could

judge from his lowering face, was Baptiste Garneau, who had always been jealous of Riel.

He sat apart from the rest, cleaning his rifle, and listening with intent to pick flaws in anything the chief might say.

"Comrades," said the half-breed chief, when he had brought them all together, "I have come to tell you of what I have done, and ask your approval.

"Only a few days ago I told you that the Sioux from the South had come into our country after having conquered all the white men they could meet, and that they were ready to become our allies and aid us in throwing off the hateful yoke of the White Mother, under which we have so long suffered. I told you that Big Bear, the chief of the Crees had promised to give his daughter, White Falcon, to the Sioux Chief; and you agreed with me that he must be made to keep his promise. Since that time, the men from the South have come here to persuade the Sioux to go back showing how they feared them. I was not allowed to be present at the council, when they came. The police enticed the Crees and the Assiniboines away, beside Fort Garry, and talked to the strangers there. Then the Big Bear refused to keep his promise to Sitting Bull, and said that White Falcon was not his to give, because she was a child of the White Mother, and could not be forced. The Sioux chief complained; but it was to no purpose; and he consented to let the matter go, and trust what he had already taken to a fight between a white hunter, who pretended he had married the girl, and one of his warriors, Rain-in-the-Face. The fight took place, and Rain-in-the-Face was killed. Now, shall we let these things be, or not? The Sioux chief is our ally, and if we give him his wife he will stay with us, and we can throw off the yoke of the police, and be men, as we were before the police came here, to rule over us. I have been to the camp of the Crees, when they were away, and have brought the girl here. Now shall we not give her to the Sitting Bull? That is all that is needed to make him our friend, and, with him on our side, we can make the Crees and Poundmaker come with us. That is what I brought you here to tell you and ask whether I have not done right. Answer me."

He had artfully appealed to all the dislikes he knew they felt against the police, and the reply was a wild confusion of shouts, amidst which the predominant sound was one of approval of what he had done, and cries for "vengeance against the police," whom they hated and feared, because the police would not let them have their own way.

As soon as the confusion subsided sufficiently for Garneau to be heard, that malcontent cried out that:

"Louis Riel had taken too much on himself, to bring the rest of them into a fight, when they had not authorized him so to do."

This produced a storm, in which the sentiment of the meeting was so strong in favor of Riel, that Garneau narrowly escaped being roughly handled by Riel's supporters; and they were all in a state of excitement, from which they were roused by a loud knocking at the door of the block-house, and the entrance of a hunter, who had been scouting the outskirts of the village, who came to tell them that a "large force of Indians had halted in the vicinity of the place, and had gone into camp, being obviously enemies, while there were Crees, Assiniboines and Sioux among them."

The news created a division of opinion among the half-breeds, which was only quelled when Riel told them that "now had come their opportunity to make the alliance secure."

"Let us send an embassy to Sitting Bull," he said, "and tell him we are willing to give up the White Falcon to him at once. That he may come to our village and take her. That she shall be his wife, and that we will all be friends. Then the Crees will yield, and this hunter will have to go back where he came from, empty-handed. That is my advice. Who agrees with me?"

Again there was a great confusion, and Garneau, who tried to speak, was hustled into a corner, and thrown down by a crowd of men who were in Riel's pay, while the vote was taken by most of the rest that "Riel's proposition should be made the sense of the meeting, and that the embassy should be sent as soon as the morning dawned." It was carried at once, and the meeting broke up, the half-breeds returning to their houses, and getting ready for peace or war, as the case might be, in the morning.

The light came and found them all moving about the village, while, as the sun rose, a long line of skirmishers could be seen advancing toward Batouche, in hostile array.

Then the half-breed chief sent his men to the block-house, and put his prisoner in safety there, after which he mounted his pony, and with a few of his most trusted followers, rode to meet the advancing line.

The Sioux chief rode in advance of the men who were coming to the village, and Riel seeing him, and full of eagerness, rode to meet him with the signal of amity.

As soon as they were within speaking distance, he called out:

"Hail to the Sitting Bull! I have a wife for him, and all he has to do is to take her. Let him advance without fear; but if any one else comes with him, but the Sioux, we will fire on them, and there will be war."

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE LAIR OF THE LION.

The advance of the skirmishers coming down on the village was composed entirely of Sioux; but Riel could see the Crees coming behind in support, as if it had been agreed to give the visitors the honor of the advance.

Not far in the rear he beheld Big Bear and Poundmaker, and the White Hunter, who were coming galloping toward them at full speed.

The moment was one of excitement, and a contest might have been precipitated by the least imprudence, so the half-breed chief hurriedly added to Sitting Bull:

"Tell the Crees to keep back. We are the friends of the Sioux, but we cannot control our young men, if the Crees think to make us go back. Keep them from us."

Sitting Bull had answered him nothing so far, but now he turned his head and made a signal with his hand, which the men in the rear interpreted as one to halt.

It was a proof of the estimation in which he was held, that thus simple wave of the hand served to check the excited Indians—who were coming on wild with eagerness to avenge the insult that had been put on their princess—and brought them to a halt.

Even Big Bear and Poundmaker stopped, and only Herrendeen continued to ride on.

Riel saw it and called to Sitting Bull:

"The white hunter will not obey the sign. If he comes, my young men may shoot at him. He must be stopped."

Sitting Bull looked back at the young hunter, and his eyes glowed as the temptation, at one stroke to win all he had been struggling for, came to him.

For a moment he seemed unable to speak and then the struggle was over, and he said to Riel in his calm, even tones:

"The white hunter must not be hurt. I have spoken. But no one else shall come with him."

Riel, who had not the stoicism of the genuine Indian, and who stood in great awe of Sitting Bull, could hardly help grinding his teeth as he heard the words; but he managed to say gruffly in answer to the chief:

"What the Sitting Bull says is law to Riel. We are his friends, and he can do with us as he pleases. But we have taken his wife from him, and she is with us. Is it well to let this man come where he can make trouble?"

The Sioux chief curled his lip in a slight disdainful smile, as he said:

"He is but one man. The Sioux do not fear the whites, unless they are ten to one. Let him come with us. I will send a messenger to my friends, Big Bear and Poundmaker, to tell them."

He spoke to Iron Horn, who rode near him, and the Sioux rode off to tell the advancing chiefs that Sitting Bull was going to hold a conference with the half-breeds, who wanted peace.

While he was gone, Sitting Bull walked his horse slowly toward the village with Riel, who was delighted at the way in which the Sioux chief appeared to approve of what he had done.

The Crees and Assiniboines had stopped at the order of their chiefs; and only a dozen Sioux accompanied their chief to Batouche, at the entrance of which the frowning mound of the block-house confronted them.

Here Riel halted, and invited the Sioux chief to come with him.

Sitting Bull dismounted from his horse, and, accompanied by the half-breed chief, entered the gloomy hall, lighted dimly by the hole through which the smoke escaped.

By the light of day one could see that it would be a hard task to storm such a place.

The roof was supported by heavy timbers, and besides the hole in the roof, the only light came in through the little loop-holes that lined the eaves, obscured by the forms of their defenders, who were peering out at the Indians, ready to report every move.

In the center of the room, by the fire, they saw the form of White Falcon, in her peasant dress; and the girl started and shrunk back at the sight of Sitting Bull, thinking she had been abandoned to her fate by her friends.

The next moment Riel, who was looking at her, saw her brighten up, and turned to see the reason, when he found that Herrendeen, who had followed them, and had come up unobserved by him, was walking forward by the side of Sitting Bull, as if he and the chief had been old friends.

Riel scowled and stalked up to the hunter, haughtily demanding:

"How came you here? You are a fool to put your head in the mouth of the lion, and you will lose it."

Then turning to the half-breeds who stood round, he called out:

"Arrest this man and kill him if he resists."

Herrendeen stepped to the side of Sitting Bull, and cocked his rifle, saying in Dakotah:

"Chief, remember your promise. The scalp

of your best warrior was mine, and I took it not. If you deceive me, you are no man."

Sitting Bull made no answer, and as the half-breeds continued to advance, the scout raised his rifle and took aim at the first.

"You can kill me," he cried, "but I don't give up my arms till I'm a dead man. I've had enough of that once before."

Then, as they continued to advance, he fired, standing by Sitting Bull.

To his surprise, the moment he pulled the trigger the Sioux chief struck up the gun so that the bullet whistled out of the hole in the roof; and before Herrendeen could get another cartridge into the chamber, the giant hand of Riel was on him, and he was seized from behind by some of Riel's friends, who had followed him, and who disarmed and bound him in a twinkling.

Had he been in his full strength he might have made a desperate struggle; but as it was he had not recovered from the stabs he had received, and the soreness of his wounds made him an easy captive.

He struggled for awhile, but finding that it was useless, he said bitterly to Sitting Bull:

"You have spoken with two tongues. No white man would have betrayed his friend as you have betrayed me."

The chief gazed at him impassively and made no reply, while Riel said savagely:

"Keep a quiet tongue or it will be worse for you. We have you now, where all the police cannot get to save you."

Then the captive was carried to the center of the room by the fire, where White Falcon rose. The half-breed chief pushed her roughly away, saying:

"Shameless woman, the Sitting Bull is your husband, and this man deserves death. Keep silent, as a woman should. This is not the Cree camp. The Crees may submit to be ruled by a woman, but the men of Batouche fear nothing."

Sitting Bull, during the brief struggle, had made no remark, and after his action in throwing up the rifle, had taken no part in the contest.

Now he said to Riel in his own language:

"If this is my wife, she can go with me now."

The half-breed smiled, as if delighted at the way in which the other accepted the gift.

"The woman is yours to do with as you please," he said, obsequiously. "If it please you to kill her for running away from such a great chief as Sitting Bull, there are none here who will stir a step to hinder you. The woman is yours."

White Falcon here spoke in the same fearless way in which she always faced the half-breed, till the time he had carried her off by main force, saying with quiet decision:

"I am not yours to give till the queen from beyond the seas has spoken. Beware what you do, both of you. This man has laid himself liable to be taken by the queen's soldiers and hung for disobedience to the White Mother."

Riel laughed as he heard her, and said coarsely:

"The White Mother can take care of her children on the other side of the sea; but her arm is not long enough to reach here, and we fear her not."

"Take her, great chief, and do with her as seems good to you."

Sitting Bull advanced to White Falcon, saying with quiet authority:

"Come with me."

The girl eyed him steadily, but said nothing till he offered to lay his hand on her arm, when she suddenly snatched from his girdle the knife that lay there, and struck viciously at him.

Had it been left to the chief alone, he would have been stabbed at that moment; but Riel had no idea of being cheated of his alliance in so easy a manner, and had been watching White Falcon sharply all the time.

As she caught the knife, he made a spring, and before it could reach its mark his great hand had caught her wrist and wrenched the weapon from her grasp as if she had been a child.

He had expected that Sitting Bull would have shown some anger at the attempt; but the face of the smiling savage never altered in the slightest degree.

He made no remark till Riel handed him back the knife, when he replaced it in his girdle and said again:

"Come with me."

He kept his hand on his knife this time, but the undaunted girl did not seem to fear it, for she shook her head defiantly and sat down on the log by the side of Herrendeen, round whose neck she threw her arms, saying:

"This is my husband. I will stay with him, and no one else."

Riel burst out into an oath, but Sitting Bull retained his marble impassivity, and only repeated his words before:

"Come with me."

White Falcon laughed in his face.

The chief nodded his head slowly and then turned to Herrendeen.

"You claim this woman for your wife?" he said.

Herrendeen answered at once.

"I do. You lost her fairly, by the wager of battle. If you are a warrior, worthy to lead the Sioux, you will keep your word."

The Sioux chief listened to him, in the same impassive way, and replied:

"If you claim this woman for your wife, tell her to come with me."

Herrendeen stared at him steadily; but could make nothing of the savage's face.

"She is in your power, and so am I," he said, in a bitter tone. "Had it not been so, I would give you an answer. As it is, do what you will; but your time will come. The Great Spirit will not smile on a man that breaks his word."

The Sioux was about to answer when they heard a noise outside, and the distant sound of a bugle came in through the open doorway.

Riel started uneasily, and ran to the door.

Sitting Bull seized the moment when he had gone to come close to Herrendeen and say in English:

"Big fool. Do what I say. White man see nothing. Do what I say."

There was a certain gleam in his eye, as he looked, that showed he meant more than he said, and Herrendeen looked at White Falcon who returned the glance doubtfully.

It seemed as if Sitting Bull wished them to trust him, for some purpose, and neither could see what he meant.

The girl had never seen him before, save at a distance, or in council, when he had been wrapped in the stoicism of the chief, and she distrusted treachery; but Herrendeen, who had seen more of him, asked in a low voice:

"What do you mean? I did not know you talked English."

Sitting Bull smiled, as he returned:

"White man fool. Do as I say."

Then the noise outside increased, and Riel was heard shouting orders to his men with quick nervous energy that showed there was some danger on foot.

Herrendeen started up and looked through the doorway, which commanded a view of the prairie. Far away in the distance they could see the red coats of the mounted police coming toward the village.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE FLAG OF TRUCE.

The Mounted Police were coming in earnest, and at a rapid rate of speed, while the half-breeds were evidently demoralized by the spectacle from the way in which they began to run to and fro, getting to the loop-holes and shouting to each other.

There was no more opportunity for speech between Sitting Bull and the captives, for Riel came running to them, and the great door of the block-house was slammed to, while the men took their places for defense.

From the moment the door was closed the captives had no further view of what was going on out of doors, though the noise increased, and they heard the bugle sounding, while the clatter of horses' hoofs outside showed that the Indians and police had advanced into the village.

But not a shot was fired from the loop-holes of the block-house, and no fire seemed to be opened on it from outside, as far as they could hear. The half-breeds inside seemed to be not a little impressed with the coming of the police, which they evidently had not expected; and they kept their places by the loop-holes, with sullen, lowering faces, as if they had made up their minds that a fight was coming which they could not escape, and in which they were going to get the worst of it, while they were equally determined not to flinch from it.

Half an hour passed in this way, and was succeeded by a deep silence, almost as trying, while Sitting Bull was the only person in the block-house who seemed to have preserved his impulsive coolness quite undisturbed.

He remained by the fire with the prisoners, and had not exchanged a word with them after the half-breeds had shut the door.

Herrendeen and his wife were seated on a log by the smoldering fire, and the Sioux chief had taken his seat on the other end, while Riel was here, there and everywhere, looking after the defenses of the place, but evidently uneasy as the moments went on.

At last he came to Sitting Bull and said in a low voice:

"The place is surrounded. The police have come, and the Crees and Assiniboines, and they have some guns with them that shoot twice. But they can never get into the block-house."

The Sioux chief turned his calm face to him and asked quietly:

"Where are my men?"

The half-breed colored slightly.

"They are with the Crees," he said, "and some of them are with the police. What are we going to do about it? We cannot yield without a fight, or the squaws will laugh at us."

Sitting Bull allowed a smile to curl his lip as he answered slowly:

"The wise warrior thinks before the battle, and does not wait till it has begun to make his plans. Wait and see what they ask for."

He was saved the necessity of saying anything further by the sound of the bugle blowing a long blast outside the block-house; and one of the men at the loop-holes called out:

"They have sent a white flag. Shall we fire at the men who carry it? They are within good range now."

The Sioux chief laid his hand on Riel's arm before the latter could answer.

"Tell them not to fire at a white flag," he said impressively. "The white men will not forgive any one that does that. I have never fired at a white flag. It is bad medicine."

Riel bowed his head submissively.

"You are a great warrior, and ought to know," he said, gravely. "I am but a child in war."

He called out to his men:

"Do not shoot at the white flag. It is bad medicine, and the great spirit will be angry. Let some one call to them to ask what they want."

Sitting Bull rose.

"Let you and I go and see," he said, "and take the prisoners with us. We will stand by the door, and they will see that you have harmed none. Then we can talk of what we wish."

Riel seemed completely under the influence of the chief, whom he admired with a reverence that amounted to a superstition.

He obeyed the order at once, and only showed his rough nature by saying harshly to Herrendeen:

"Come with us, but don't think you are going to escape. Before I give you up, now that you are in my power, I will kill you and the girl together. Come with us, and if you try to make a signal to the enemy, I will shoot you at once."

Herrendeen made no answer, for he saw that the half-breed was in a state of excitement and disappointed rage, that rendered him reckless of his actions for the time. He followed Riel and Sitting Bull while White Falcon walked by the side of her husband, whom she had never quitted since he had come in.

She kept her arms round him, supporting him in his weakness, and so the four people proceeded to the door, which was opened just as the bugle blew a third blast.

Then they stepped outside and found themselves in the open air, facing Major Roberts, with a trumpeter and a white flag held by a soldier.

In the rear, but out of gunshot, was a huge circle of Indians, with a few soldiers here and there sprinkled among them, and the bright gleam of the sun on a knoll at a little distance, was reflected back from the polished surface of two rifled guns that had been drawn up on the top of the hill, the guns pointing at the block-house.

Not a man was within reach of harm from the rifles of the defenders of the block-house; but none the less, the investment was complete, and the major sat on his horse as coolly as if he feared nothing, though the loop-holes of the block-house were full of tubes leveled at the little party.

As he saw the door open he dismounted from his horse and gave the bridle to the trumpeter, while he advanced to meet the four who came out.

Sitting Bull had gathered his blanket round him and stepped out with the dignity of a prince, while Riel looked sullen and fierce as he followed the chief, seeming to render him obedience in this, as in all else.

Herrendeen and his wife, wondering what was going to come of all this, yet hoping for the best, owing to the unlooked-for appearance of the major, hung back a little, and let Riel and the Sioux chief precede them.

The major did not come far. He only advanced a few steps, where he could be seen by both sides, and waited for the chief to approach.

Then he bowed ceremoniously, and Sitting Bull returned the obeisance, while they used all the ceremonious signs that are common on the plains when strangers meet.

The Sioux was the first to speak.

"My white brother has come to see me, and I am glad to see him. Sitting Bull is safe, wherever he is."

"I know that well enough, chief," returned the soldier. "I didn't come to see you at all, but this man, who has stolen the White Falcon."

"We heard that the Crees had come to get her, and that you had come with them. The White Mother does not allow fighting among her children, and we came here to stop any battle."

Sitting Bull smiled.

"Why should there be a battle? We are all friends of the White Mother."

"That is true, chief; but there has been fighting, for all that. This man, Riel, came to a camp near our fort, and stole that girl, when the hunters were away. What are you doing here in friendship with him? The woman I see yonder has been married to a man, and you have said that you yielded to the decision of battle. Yet now I find you here in friendship

with the man who stole her. This will not do. The girl must be given up to her father."

Riel interrupted with his usual impetuosity, saying:

"The girl was promised to Sitting Bull by her father, and I have given her to him. She cannot go back unless you take her."

And he glared at the major as if he wished nothing better than that the officer should give an angry answer, which would precipitate a fight on the spot.

But Roberts was used to dealing with such characters and did not allow the slightest symptom of irritation to escape him.

He continued talking to Sitting Bull as if the half-breed had not been in existence, and said to the Sioux chief:

"The White Mother has sheltered you when the men from the South drove you out. It is not right that you should be found among her foes."

The Sioux chief smiled as he asked:

"Since what time have I shown that I am her foe? I came here to be at peace, and I have struck no foe yet."

The major frowned impatiently, for he thought the savage chief was endeavoring to deceive him, and he hastily answered:

"What words are these? The Crees met this man, and you were in front of them. They trusted you to go before them, and here you are, at peace with this man, who has stolen the daughter of the Cree chief. Tell her to come here and go with us, if you are in earnest."

Sitting Bull smiled.

"The woman will not obey me. I told her to come with me, and she refused. As for the man, I have nothing to do with him. He followed me because he would not trust me, and the men of Batouche have taken him prisoner. Had he stayed behind, there would have been no trouble."

Here Riel, who had been scowling as if he thought the Sioux chief was going to sell him out, brightened up, and said boastingly:

"I took him, and I took her. Her I have given to the Sitting Bull for a wife, and he can do with her as he will. But the man is mine, and even to the Sitting Bull will I not give him up."

The chief turned round on him before the major, and asked him quietly:

"Is the girl mine, to do with as I will?"

"She is," returned the half-breed, but in a reluctant sort of way, as if he doubted the reason of the chief in asking the question.

Sitting Bull turned to White Falcon and said to her, as he had said before:

"Come with me."

This time the girl hesitated, but there was something in the eye of the chief that inspired Herrendeen, who had been watching him closely, to give her a slight push and whisper:

"Go. He means you well."

White Falcon looked at her husband in a sharp, searching way, and then slowly left him and went over to Sitting Bull, to whom she said:

"He has told me to come and I obey him."

The chief's face lighted up with a singular look, as he took her hand, and said to Herrendeen:

"Do you give up all claim to this girl?"

The scout threw back his head proudly.

"She is my wife, but I trust her to your honor, because you have given your word. I kept mine, and now let me see if you will keep yours."

Sitting Bull nodded and smiled, and then led the girl up to the major, to whom he said:

"Take her to her father. I have too many wives already. This one would be in the way. Take her to her father."

The major, who had not anticipated so easy a victory, took the hand of the girl and asked:

"But the hunter—what of him?"

Here Riel laid his hand roughly on the shoulder of the scout, saying:

"He is mine, and no man can take him from me. If the Sitting Bull has turned traitor to his friends, we can take care of ourselves."

The Sioux chief frowned for the first time since Herrendeen had seen him, and the change in his face was amazing, as he said to Riel, in a low, grating tone:

"Who asked you, or any of yours, to interfere with the Sioux when they have chosen their path? This man is my friend, and if you harm a hair of his head, you and all your men shall be roasted at fires that I will make out of the bones of your children."

The moment he had said it, Riel started back as if he had been stung, and seizing the wounded scout by the arm began to drag him to the block-house.

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ting Bull sprung up behind the major himself, and the whole party galloped off, none too soon.

The moment Louis Riel had dragged his prisoner into the block-house, he shouted out some orders as he closed and barred the door; and a scattering volley was fired out after the fugitives, which would have killed one or all of them, had it not been for the demoralization produced among the half-breeds by the sudden change of Sitting Bull, whom they had thought their firm friend and ally, to an open enemy, as he made his defiance, and fled with the major.

But the bearers of the flag of truce succeeded in making their escape; and Herrendeen, who had been dragged into the block-house by a man so much his superior in physical strength that he would have had hard work to cope with him in full health and strength, found himself as helpless as a child in the hands of the enraged half-breed, as he dragged him to the fire and said, as he flung him rudely down:

"You shall roast there before the soldiers come in here. You shall never see White Falcon again, or Sitting Bull, or any of those men who have turned traitors to our cause."

Then, leaving the scout on the log by the fire, he ran to the loophole which commanded the best view of the besiegers, and saw that the circle of Indians outside was closing in, and that the two cannon were being pulled down the hill, to the nearest point that could be reached without coming within range of the long rifles of the half-breeds.

Riel saw that, within a very short time, he would be closely besieged, and that the chances were decidedly against him.

He had in the village not more than a hundred and fifty fighting-men; and though there were other half-breed villages in the country, they were scattered far and wide, and the movement on which he had set all his hopes of making a united struggle against the power of the Government seemed to have failed. He had counted on Sitting Bull being grateful for the way in which White Falcon had been brought back to him; the chief had turned against him, leaving him to the mercy of his foes, while the Sioux themselves seemed to have joined the police in the attack.

But the half-breed leader was courageous; and now, desperate at the situation in which he found himself, saw that his friends were in the same state of mind as himself, seeing the hopelessness of resistance and yet determined to die at their posts, if need be, and never to surrender the block-house.

Presently as he looked he saw that the battery was in position, and a broad flash from one of the guns was followed by the shriek and throbbing rush of a shell.

The half-breeds in the block-house uttered a low moan of alarm, for though they were used to the effects of bullets, shells were matters of a very different kind.

Before the shuddering inmates of the block-house realized what was coming there was a crash over their heads and a second loud report as the shell struck the roof and burst, sending the earth lying on top of the timbers flying, while one fragment broke a timber and scattered a shower of dirt and splinters into the hall below.

Then the defenders of the block-house heard a wild yell of triumph outside, and a second shot was fired, which struck with equally accurate aim, the second shell knocking the hole which the first had made into a gaping breach, through which the light of day streamed down into the block-house.

The Indians outside cheered more wildly than before at the sight, and there was a short lull, while the artillerists were reloading the guns for a second salvo.

Then came a cry from one of the men at the loopholes:

"The women! the children! They are coming to the block-house!"

Riel uttered a cry of despair.

He had sent some of the women and children away to the northern plains in the direction of the Lost Mountain, and the few that were not able to bear the journey had been placed in an abandoned cottage at the other end of the village, where it was thought that no one would think of looking for them, while the cottage was provided with a huge cellar, in which it was thought they would be certainly safe.

Now, as he looked through the loophole, he saw the poor creatures, scared by the firing, coming running to the block-house in full view of police and Indians, while the latter, seeing the advantage offered, were sweeping down at full speed on their ponies, to carry off the helpless fugitives.

The sight roused all the feeling that exists in the bosom of every human being, be he savage or civilized; and the half-breeds rushed to the door, reckless of what might happen, and began to fire at the Indians, with an accuracy of aim that sent the red-men to the rightabout, while the women and children were rescued, and brought into the great block-house: the fire of the artillery ceasing, while the confused struggle was going on, as if the artillerists had not the heart to hurt the helpless people. Riel hum-

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE BOMBARDMENT.

THE Sioux chief, as soon as he had uttered his open defiance of the half-breed, said to the major, hurriedly:

"Come, it is time to run."

The major saw that he was right, and the three ran to the horses, where White Falcon was mounted behind the trumpeter; while Sit-

self was carried away by the scene, and made no objection to their coming in; but when the door was at last secured, and the new crowd of useless, or worse than useless people, in the hall, he realized what a burden they had put on him, and eyed the poor creatures gloomily, as if he had a mind to turn them out again. And the moment they were safe in, came another salvo of the guns, and two more shells were planted in the roof of the block-house, with a precision of aim that showed the police gunners had the range perfectly.

A new hole was torn in the roof; and the only wonder seemed to be that, so far, no one had been killed by the fire, which was directed entirely against the defenses of the house, and not at its inmates.

As for the Sioux and Crees, they would not venture within gunshot of the block-house, or any of the houses of the village, which were still occupied by defenders. They only kept circling round in the distance; while the sound of occasional shots, from other parts of the village, showed that the half-breed farmers, who had barricaded themselves in their own houses, were trying their best to make it hot for the riders.

A third salvo came from the guns, and this time the shells ripped off a great part of the roof, striking the building at an angle where they would do the greatest damage, when a cry rose from the women and children, huddled together in the hall.

Then Baptiste Garneau, who had kept remarkably quiet during the previous fighting, cried out:

"How long shall we stay here, to be killed, to please Louis Riel? Let us hoist the white flag, and tell them we want to talk."

Had he said this before, the half-breeds would have mobbed him; but the influence of the chief in whom they had trusted had been sapped, in the last few minutes, by the effects of the cannonade, more than one would have believed possible had they not seen it.

Even the ignorant and superstitious half-breeds could see that Louis had made a mistake. He had promised them a friend in Sitting Bull, and the Sioux chief had deserted them. He had promised them that the Crees and all the other tribes in the Northwest would join them in resisting the police; and here they were in alliance with the very men they were supposed to be hating.

The cry for the white flag to be raised was taken up by more than one; and Baptiste Garneau, seeing that his proposition was well received, yelled excitedly:

"Put it up quick, before they fire again. They have killed no one yet, but the next time they will hit us surely."

Then they began to hunt for something to use as a flag, staggered by the discovery that not a rag of white was to be found in the block-house.

The half-breeds used colored shirts, or none at all; and towels were things unknown in the economy of Batouche.

While they were debating they heard the loud crash of another cannon, and the shell went tearing through the already battered corner of the block-house, knocking down the timbers at that point, and causing a howl of terror to go up from the women and children, who shrieked to the men to "stop fighting, or they would all be killed!"

Then Louis Riel, who had been sitting in sultry silence, too much crushed by the weight of his misfortunes to pluck up spirit sufficient to resent the mutinous behavior of Baptiste Garneau, all of a sudden jumped up and shouted:

"Silence in the block-house! I will settle this matter."

With that, he beckoned to two of his most trusty followers, whom he knew he could depend on, and they seized the scout Herrendeen, who had been seated on the log all this time, watching what was going on, and hoping for his ultimate release in vain.

Nevermiss was dragged to the door of the block-house, which was flung open, when the half-breed chief rushed out, with his followers, into the open air, shouting:

"Follow me, all, and we will take the battery! Put the white man in front, that they may see him and kill him first."

The excited half-breeds followed in a rush, and Herrendeen found himself in the midst of a mob of frantic and desperate men, hurried along in the very front, while the half-breed chief pushed him along before him, shouting to his followers to "fire at the artillerymen and take the guns."

For a few moments all was confusion, and then Herrendeen saw that the horses were being galloped up to remove the guns, while the Indians were swooping down on all sides, to intercept the retreat of the defenders of the block-house to their stronghold.

Then he saw some wild figures dashing in front of the Indians, among whom he recognized the chiefs, Sitting Bull the most conspicuous of all, and a cry arose among the half-breeds to "get back to the block-house; that treachery was abroad."

How the next few minutes passed he knew not, but when he recovered his coolness, they were back at the door of the house from whence

they had made their mad sally, and the red uniform of Major Roberts was seen, coming down to meet them, the major waving his arms to signal the Indians to keep back, while he waved a white flag, as a signal for another parley.

The women and children from the block-house had come out; and the whole force of the defenders stood gathered in a sullen group round the door, while the major, Sitting Bull, Big Bear and Poundmaker were seen in front of all, by the white flag.

Riel was disposed in his desperation to fire at it; but by this time Baptiste Garneau had raised the cry:

"A parley! a parley! Why should we die, to please Louis Riel? Let us hear what they have to say."

And this time the half-breed chief was too demoralized to make a fresh effort. He saw that his followers were deserting him, and that the guns he had hoped to take had been removed out of danger, while the sight of the white flag had brought most of his people over to the side of their foes.

Sullenly he waited, and Sitting Bull came up and called out:

"Why should we kill each other?"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE SURRENDER.

THE sight of the white flag had produced a revulsion of feeling among the half-breeds, and especially among the women and children.

The men might have been disposed to fight to the last; but the others, after the danger they had already undergone, were too eager for a cessation of hostilities to give any aid to Riel in his obstinacy. They crowded round him, and hung at his knees, imploring him to "submit to the mercy of the police, and not to get them all killed," while Baptiste Garneau kept up his wail: asking, "why they should all be killed, to please Louis Riel?" so that the call of Sitting Bull: "Why should we kill each other?" was a welcome one to all but Riel.

But the half-breed leader saw that his chances were by no means gone yet; for he had by his side a compact body of well-armed men, all good shots.

That he was still feared, was shown by the fact that the mounted Indians, who were hanging round the village, did not venture within gunshot, while the chiefs of their party had come in under a white flag, and had no soldiers with them.

He stood out to the front of his men when Sitting Bull called out his question, and answered in a loud voice:

"We have striven to kill none; but we shall kill all of you, now, if you do not withdraw the men that are round our village. We have done nothing, and you have fired at us. Keep away from us, or my young men will fire at you. We want none of your parleys, or white flags."

Then, turning to his men, he called out:

"We can end the war with one stroke. Here are all the traitors together, and we have our guns. Let us kill the white chief, and Big Bear and Poundmaker together, and the rest will run."

Sitting Bull heard him speak, and rode his horse straight up to the desperate man.

"Look at that flag," he said, pointing to the white banner. "No Sioux warrior ever fired at such a flag, who returned to his tribe and was allowed to speak in council. If you wish to fire at me, here I am. Kill me if you dare, and I promise you that my men shall do as I told you before. They shall roast you at a fire which they will make of the bones of your children and women. You are a fool to think that a Sioux, who has fought the white man, all his life, like a man, would break his word to please you. Had I left things to my men, they would have assaulted you long before; but I wished to give you a chance to live, because we came to this land to have peace, under the White Mother. You must not think that, if we wanted to fight, we could not get all the fighting we wanted in the land of the South. The Great Father there knows what the Sioux can do; but now we came here to make peace, and we are not going to war again to please any but ourselves."

The murmur of approval with which he was heard by the half-breeds, who understood the tongue in which he spoke, showed how they received his words; but Riel answered him:

"That is well for you to say; but who is to take care of us, or save us from the vengeance of the police if we lay down our arms?"

"We are not in the land of the South, where they let men fight them and do not punish them. The White Mother never forgives those who disobey her; and if we must die, we might as well die fighting as be killed like sheep."

The Sioux chief beckoned to Major Roberts, who rode up.

Sitting Bull waited till he had arrived and then said to Riel:

"Let the white chief hear what I have to say, and let him approve of it. If these men lay down their arms and cease to fight, none of them are to be hurt, not even their leader."

"The Sioux have come to the land of the White Mother to be at peace, and they will not

fight against her, but neither will they fight against their red brothers or those who are of the mixed blood."

"The men in the block-house will come out, and the soldiers will destroy it, so that there may be no more fighting; but not a man shall be hurt, and all shall go to their own tepees and their houses in peace. Does the white chief approve this?"

Major Roberts nodded.

"Not a hair of their heads shall be hurt; but they must lay down their arms," he said. "If they do not consent to submit, we shall open fire again, and next time we shall not do as we have done."

"Hitherto we have tried to avoid hitting any one, but if they trust to the block-house to protect them, they have found already what a bad protection it will be to them."

"Let the men speak, and let them come away from Louis Riel, if he is not willing to let the others live under the White Mother. She is gentle and does not wish to hurt her red children, but if Louis Riel wishes to be made an example of, he will stay where he is."

Then rose from the half-breeds headed by Baptiste Garneau a cry to Riel to "surrender and not to have them all killed," which broke the stubborn leader down at last.

He waved his hand to the rest, and said, in a broken kind of way, not devoid of a certain dignity of its own:

"Have it your own way. I will go to the woods, and you can all have peace. But when I am gone, the time will come when you will wish you had stood by me."

He threw his rifle over his arm and walked away, while the soldiers and Indians, at a signal from the major, who waved his arm to them, came rushing down into the village, yelling and waving their arms in triumph.

Sitting Bull checked all this exuberance of spirit among his men by a simple gesture; and within half an hour from the time the flag of truce came in, the village was full of people fraternizing with each other, and the first rebellion of Louis Riel had come to an untimely end, strangled in its birth.

As for Herrendeen, he found himself at liberty, hardly knowing how he came there; and the first intimation he had of his new position was when White Falcon rode up to him, leading a gayly-caparisoned war-pony, and invited him to mount and accompany her to the presence of the Crees, who wished to see the chief that was to succeed Big Bear, when the old warrior gave up the reins of power.

He mounted the animal, and rode over to where the Crees were assembled, under Big Bear, in a huge circle.

The old chief saw him coming and beckoned to the warriors, who closed in round White Falcon and Herrendeen, as soon as they had reached the side of Big Bear.

Then the old chief cried:

"Men of the Crees, you have all known the White Falcon, child of the White Mother and daughter of my daughter. She will be your chief after I am gone; but there are those who have feared that a woman cannot be trusted to lead warriors to battle. Therefore she has chosen for herself a great warrior for a husband—the greatest warrior in our land, who has slain the best man in a nation of fighters. Men of the Crees, behold your war-chief, the Far Fighter."

Then rose from the Crees a wild yell, as they welcomed their new chief; and their principal men crowded round the young hunter, to shake his hand and render him respect, after which they took him off with them to a camp which had been hastily pitched near the village, where the ceremonies of initiation were to be performed.

That night there was a great feast, to which all the Indians of the confederation were bid, and the chief of the mounted police was there to ratify, on behalf of the White Mother, the choice of the new war-chief.

When it was over, Herrendeen had been duly adopted into the Cree nation, and a firm alliance had been formed between all the Indians present, the hunting-grounds of each having been assigned to them by a council, and all causes of complaint apparently removed.

Only the Sitting Bull was observed to be very quiet during the council, and though requested to speak, he only said that "he had nothing to say now, but that he wished to be at peace for the rest of his life."

At the close of the council he came to the new war-chief and said to him, apart from the rest of the Indians:

"When the sun is half-way to the top of the heavens to-morrow I wish to see you and speak about matters of importance to my people."

Herrendeen promised to be with him and the chief named a spot on the prairie at some distance from the village, where they would be safe from observation.

Thither the hunter repaired next day and found the Sioux chief waiting for him alone.

He was unarmed, save with a knife, and his face was grave and thoughtful.

He had built a small fire under the shelter of some timber, and was seated by the side there-

of, while his pony was feeding under the shadow of the timber, at a little distance off.

Herrendeen dismounted from his horse and came to meet the Sioux.

Sitting Bull acknowledged his presence by a slight bow and said:

"Stake out your horse. We have a good deal to say, and must be alone."

Herrendeen obeyed and sat down by the chief who produced a pipe, from which both smoked a little before Sitting Bull said anything.

At last he began:

"White chief, you have attained all that you desired at last."

Herrendeen bowed his head.

"I have," he said, "but I should not have done it had you not kept your word, though strongly tempted to break it."

Sitting Bull acknowledged the compliment by a slight inclination of the head.

"White chief, you have said truly. I was much tempted to break my word; but a Sioux is not like a white man, to yield to temptation. You, too, have kept your word. You are a great warrior, and have shown it in the sight of all men. The time is coming when the red-man must go to the other end of the earth to get away from the white man, and there is no way in which he can escape his doom. I have had my fill of fighting, and wish to live at peace hereafter."

"You can do that easily enough here," said the hunter, mildly.

"White chief, you have made a mistake," said the Sioux, slowly. "I am not so blind as the white men who saw me at the council thought me. It is true that we refused to go back to the land of the South then. My people were mad, as they thought of all they had suffered, and were angry at any man who told them that their time was come. But nevertheless I, who have watched over my people since I was a child, can see what they cannot see. The time has come when the red-man must leave hunting, and live like the white man, or be destroyed like the beasts of the forest."

Herrendeen looked at him in surprise. The expression of the chief's face was less that of a savage than a philosopher. Sitting Bull was, in that moment of confidence, less like a chief of the Sioux than a thoughtful statesman.

"Then what does the chief wish to do to take away the danger from his people?" asked Nevermiss.

"I will tell you," was the reply. "Men have been among the white people in the East, and have come back, telling of all sorts of wonders. I have always doubted what they said, and especially that there were so many white men as they say. Now I would go and see with my own eyes. If I come back and tell my people what I have seen, they will believe me when they would believe no other man. White chief, I wish to go to the East and see with my own eyes whether these things are true. You are one of them, and can go and tell the Great Father in the South that Sitting Bull, who would not surrender while he was opposed by soldiers, is ready to come back, if by so doing he can save his people. Are you willing to do this for me? Remember that I have saved your life to-day, and made peace; when, but for me, you would have been killed if once the battle had been opened. You put yourself in danger once, through not trusting me, and I had a hard task to save you alive. Now will you be willing to leave your wife, and go to the land of the South, to treat with the Great Father for the return of Sitting Bull and his people, and the end of all Indian wars? We are the last remnant of the men who have fought the soldiers all these years."

As he ceased he resumed his pipe, and calmly waited for the answer of the young man.

Herrendeen was puzzled what to say. The proposition of the chief opened before him a brilliant prospect, if he could accomplish the treaty; but there was something behind it that he could not get over.

"The chief does me much honor," he said; "but he forgets that the White Father is great, and that he has many children. He would not listen to a man like me, who is not known there. Besides, I have married a princess of the Crees, and my people here would not let me go from her yet. But if the chief really desires to go to the South, I can tell him a way in which he can do so. He must send for the white chief of the soldiers, and tell him that he may communicate with the chiefs of the soldiers in the South, and then another embassy can be sent."

Sitting Bull shook his head.

"My people will not consent while they are in this country. They think that they will have nothing to do but to live as they lived before the white men came to our country. I alone know that they are mistaken. There are not enough buffalo in this country for all of us, and the winter is coming on. There will be strife in the country, between us and the Crees and Assiniboines, about the buffalo; and we cannot stay here forever. We have peace now, but to make it last we must go back to the country from whence we came, and live in peace with the white men."

Then he puffed musingly at his pipe for a little while, and presently asked:

"Do you know the buffalo chief?"

Herrendeen knew who he meant, for the name of the renowned Cody was familiar to every Indian and white man in the Northwest.

"I have seen the buffalo chief," he said, "but he does not know me. I am but a boy, and he was a great warrior before I could shoot straight."

The Sioux seemed pleased at his modesty, for he said:

"That is right. Neither do I know the buffalo chief. I have never seen him, but I have heard from my people that he is a great warrior, who took the first scalp that was taken after the death of the Long Hair."

"Will you go to the South for me and see the buffalo chief? He is a great warrior, and the Great Father in the South will listen to him when he would to no one else."

"Tell him that the Sitting Bull is ready to come into the lines of the South, if he can be assured of protection and peace; that he is tired of war and would be at rest. Will you do that for me?"

Herrendeen nodded.

"I am ready to do anything that can be done to end this fighting between white men and red. The land is large enough for all of us, and there is no reason why we should kill each other any more."

Sitting Bull nodded emphatically.

"You are right, white chief. We fight and fight, and the result of it all is that one fight brings another, and there is no end of it."

"It is time that we tried to live at peace now, while there is no danger to make us afraid."

Herrendeen was struck by the thoughtful way, not devoid of sadness, in which he spoke. The great Sioux had recognized the inevitable at last, and was thinking only of saving his people from the dangers that his clear sight had detected, when they thought only of the fine hunting country into which they had come, with no soldiers to disturb them in their wild way of life.

Sitting Bull, in a moment when he had succeeded in his plan of taking his tribe out of the country where he had waged such a long and harassing war, was a greater man in his resolve to have peace, than he had been in the days of his greatest power.

The white hunter rose and held out his hand to the red chief, saying:

"Sitting Bull, if the white men and the red knew each other better, we might all live in peace. I will do your message for you."

Sitting Bull grasped the extended hand with a grave smile, as he answered:

"It is well. There is a remnant yet to be saved, and my people must not perish like wild beasts. When you come back, I shall be here."

Three days after this conference the white hunter rode away from Fort Garry toward the southern border, taking with him a letter from Major Roberts to the American commander.

CHAPTER XXXV.

CONCLUSION.

BUT the time was not yet ripe for the coming of the Sitting Bull into the country he had defied so long, and whose best warriors he had baffled and beaten.

The winter came on, and still the Sioux remained in the British dominions, while no tidings came from their white messenger.

It was a hard winter, and the buffalo, which in former times had been in the habit of migrating into the Southern country during the winter, finding themselves debarred of that liberty, from the increasing encroachments of the settlers in Montana and Dakota, died by hundreds and thousands in the inclement climate of the North, while the Indians crouched in their tepees, and found by bitter experience how much colder a northern winter could be than that of the land they had abandoned.

When the spring came their ponies were hardly able to stand, while jealousies were breeding between them and the northern Indians, who saw that the game was being thinned, and that soon there would not be enough for all.

A second summer passed, and still no tidings came from the South. The American officers, smarting under the reception they had experienced at the former council did not care to hazard a repetition of such a scene, while Major Roberts and the Mounted Police were put to all they knew to keep the peace between their turbulent vassals.

Louis Riel had disappeared into the United States, or there might have been more trouble, but the major managed to keep peace for that summer, knowing that the winter would keep it for him when it came.

The second winter found the Sioux diminished in numbers by men who had left the band and slipped across the lines, on various pretexts, to give themselves up at the American agencies and be counted in among the Indians who received rations from the Government.

Bitter as it was to the great Sioux, he was

forced to realize that the people who had trusted to him for so long, were losing their love and confidence, and were becoming willing to save themselves at his expense.

One by one, squad by squad, they kept on deserting, till he was left with only a scanty fifty lodges or so, and heard daily from the South that men who had been in the fight of the Big Horn, and who had sworn never to leave their chief, were in United States agencies, drawing rations and obeying the Government, as long as they were fed.

At last Herrendeen returned and brought news that the Government did not seem anxious to have him back at any price, but that they had finally consented, if he would come in and give up his arms, he and all with him.

The struggle in the mind of the haughty chief, who had never met the American soldiers save to conquer them, was long and severe; but at last he consented, and the little remnant of the confederation of Indians, who had killed the Long Hair, took up their way to the border, just as the autumn was closing in.

Had it been spring, they might have held out another year; but the terrors of one more winter, such as they had experienced in the cold plains of snow of the Northwest, were too great to be faced.

They came to the border, where they were met by a strong force of United States soldiers, and gave up their arms and ponies without murmur.

There were eighty lodges in the band that surrendered with Sitting Bull, and it was all that was left of more than a thousand lodges which had gone across the border.

They were taken to Standing Rock Agency, and a jealous watch was kept over the chief; for the Government did not seem to be able to conceive that the man who had fought them so long and persistently could have surrendered in earnest at last. They rather fancied that he had come back to breed a new revolt, when the time was ripe, and could not persuade themselves that he meant what he said: that he "wanted only peace and was tired of fighting."

At Standing Rock Agency there were not wanting men who pretended that the Sitting Bull was hatching another plot, and it was finally resolved to arrest him and put him in irons.

It took a strong force of soldiers to execute the order, and the excitement among the Indians at the agency was so great that a new Indian war was feared.

But the man who had slain the Long Hair had seen for himself the uselessness of resistance, and submitted to be placed in irons.

Then he was removed from the rest of the Indians, and it was thought that they would desert him in his trouble; but the reverse was the case. The very men who had left him in Canada, were the most constant of his attendants in his imprisonment, and the Sitting Bull, a disarmed captive, had more power than in the summit of his prosperity.

Had he given the signal, another Indian outbreak would have taken place; but he had surrendered for good, and never murmured in his captivity, behaving so well that he was finally released.

He expressed a wish to go to the East, to see the wonders of the white men, and it was thought well to send him. It was known that no Indian, who had once seen with his own eyes the number of men that could be brought against him, had ever after swerved from his faith to the Government.

The only problem was to find a man who would be responsible for him, and this was found in the person of the king of scouts and border trailers, the renowned William F. Cody, better known as "Buffalo Bill."

The great white warrior and the great red chief had never met; but the business was arranged for them, and finally Sitting Bull came to the East and took his first ride on the railroad. He was taken to the great cities, and saw, with his own eyes, what he had longed to see, ever since he had heard of them: the "wonders of the white men."

The sight produced on him the effect it has always produced on the red-man who is brought in contact with the highest form of civilization. He saw that he had been overmatched, and had not known it.

THE END.

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